

MANTRA DAS

108 BEATPOEMS

Diary of a Poetry Fiend



- 1> THE FEELING WHERE I FELT ALIVE
- 2> HUNGRY GHOST
- 3> ON AND ON
- 4> ON AND ON (PART 2)
- 5> THE MALL, 2002
- 6> INTO THE FOREST OF THE SPIRITS
- 7> THE ISSUE OF ANTETHISM
- 8> WASHBURN
- 9> I AM A WARRIOR
- 10> CRACKER JACK BOX
- 11> THE LYING ROBOT
- 12> THE WASTE LAND
- 13> OUTSTANDING YOUNG WOMEN
- 14> THE LAND WAS OUR MOTHER
- 15> ODE TO A HOT WIND
- 16> THE MYSTERY OF UNDERSEA EARTH
- 17> A PEACE PIPE
- 18> NO OTHER GUEST
- 19> CITYSCAPE
- 20> THE CATTY GIRLS, 1904
- 21> THE ART OF CONVERSATION
- 22> POEM 25
- 23> THE TRUTH ABOUT SHAME
- 24> ST. JUDE
- 25> CREATURE OF THE DESERT
- 26> THE UNRETURNED
- 27> THE LUNCHBOX
- 28> TRANSLATING THE VIRUS
- 29> JOURNEY HOME
- 30> A SUMMER ANGEL
- 31> THE COYOTE SPIRIT
- 32> KRISHNA
- 33> SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN

- 34> THE BASKAKANBISHI
- 35> PRECISELY
- 36> THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM
- 37> THE COG IN THE WHEEL
- 38> THE GREEN PHARMACY
- 39> ISAIAH
- 40> SANGHA
- 41> THE MANY VOICES
- 42> 108 POEMS
- 43> THE MOUNTAIN
- 44> OUR LADY OF THE TURNING AIR
- 45> A CONVERSATION ON UNDERSTANDING
- 46> THIS IS D * * *
- 47> AND THEN I GOT LOST IN MY JOURNALING AGAIN
- 48> QUESTIONING AND THE SELF
- 49> WELBY
- 50> THE SILENT MAN
- 51> FROM AN INVITATION TO BUNKER MADNESS
- 52> WATERS OF THE EARTH
- 53> THE DAY IN QUESTION
- 54> THE ULTRAVIOLET GOD
- 55> A HAIKU
- 56> THIS IS HOW IT BEGAN
- 57> THE 27 CLUB
- 58> ON WRITING A POEM
- 59> THE KORAN
- 60> A MAP OF OPTIMISM
- 61> LIFE, NOT A SELF
- 62> THIS IS THE BEST POEM I HAVE EVER WRITTEN
- 63> THE SHADES OF THE FATHERS
- 64> THE CASTLE AT WITBYBUSH
- 65> THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WINNING THE GAME AND WINNING A GAME
- 66> A CHEER FOR THE ORGAN GRINDER AND HIS MONKEY

- 67> THE MONKEY OF THE GODS
- 68> I HAD THIS VISION OF HEAVEN
- 69> A FEW THOUGHTS ON MEDITATION
- 70> OUT TO THE WOODS
- 71> THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS
- 72> I, 6-LEGGED COW
- 73> THE CROW OF GHOSTS
- 74> A STORY
- 75> THE OWL
- 76> THE OCEAN
- 77> FOUR DEVILS AND ONE MIRACLE
- 78> A MEDITATION ON THE ROAD
- 79> THE WISDOM OF HORUS
- 80> A NOTE ON NEW NAMES AND NEW FACES
- 81> OUR LADY
- 82> CHANGES IN THE DESERT
- 83> THE COUNTRY OF A THOUSAND BEGGARS
- 84> THE CAT IN THE MOON
- 85> THIS IS MY OAKLAND, THAT IS MY L.A.
- 86> BOY, I MISS YOU SOMETIMES
- 87> YOGA FOR ATHEISTS
- 88> COMPOSER
- 89> AFTER THE FEAST
- 90> I HAD A LITTLE MOUSE
- 91> THE LESSER BROTHERHOOD
- 92> THE CROSSROADS OF THE WORLD
- 93> COYOTE
- 94> SINKING IN THE EARTH
- 95> A GATHERING OF RAVENS
- 96> THE STAIRS
- 97> UNDER THE FLAG
- 98> EASTER
- 99> JESUS, LAZARUS, AND THE RICH YOUNG RULER
- 100> AWAKE
- 101> DOLPHINS

102> SPRING
103> THE LOTTERY IN LIFE
104> GANESHA
105> THE TIP
106> THE WHITE SAGE
107> ENLIGHTENMENT
108> UPON MY SHED

 I HEREBY DECLARE THIS BOOK PUBLIC DOMAIN (2022)

PEACE AND LOVE,
MANTRA DAS

FEELING WHERE I FELT ALIVE

BY MANTRA DAS

I LOOK INSIDE MYSELF AND FIND A STRANGER TO MYSELF
I LOOK OUTSIDE MYSELF AND FIND A STRANGER TO MYSELF
I LOOK SKYWARD AND FIND A STRANGER TO MYSELF
I LOOK EARTHWARD AND FIND A STRANGER TO MYSELF
I LOOK AT MY HAND AND SEE IT FILLED WITH THE BLOOD OF A STRANGER TO MYSELF
I REMEMBER THE DAYS OF LIVING
THE DAYS WHERE I FELT ALIVE
IT WAS LIKE NOTHING COULD GET ME
I FELT LIKE NOTHING COULD FAIL
I REMEMBER I LOVED THE FEELING
THE FEELING WHERE I FELT ALIVE
THE ENERGY, THE POWER, THE PASSION
THE STRENGTH, THE DURABILITY
WHEN THEY LAUGHED THEY LAUGHED LOUDER
WHEN THEY LOVED THEY LOVED HARDER
BUT THEN SOMETHING WENT WRONG
SOMETHING WENT REALLY REALLY WRONG
I REMEMBER THE DAYS OF LIVING
THE DAYS WHERE I FELT ALIVE
IT WAS LIKE NOTHING COULD GET ME
I FELT LIKE NOTHING COULD FAIL
I REMEMBER I LOVED THE FEELING
THE FEELING WHERE I FELT ALIVE
THE ENERGY, THE POWER, THE PASSION
THE STRENGTH, THE DURABILITY
WHEN THEY LAUGHED THEY LAUGHED LOUDER
WHEN THEY LOVED THEY LOVED HARDER
BUT THEN SOMETHING WENT WRONG
SOMETHING WENT REALLY REALLY WRONG
I REMEMBER THE DAYS OF LIVING

HUNGRY GHOST

BY MANTRA DAS

I AM A HUNGRY GHOST

I AM BEYOND BUDDHIST

I AM BEYOND A PRIEST

I AM BEYOND A POET

I AM BEYOND A MONSTER

I AM BEYOND

I AM BEYOND ALONE

I AM BEYOND

I AM BEYOND A MONK

I AM BEYOND MY FATHER

I AM BEYOND MY MOTHER

I AM BEYOND A GOD

I AM BEYOND A DEMON

I AM BEYOND ENLIGHTENMENT

I AM BEYOND INSANITY

I AM BEYOND HAPPINESS

I HAVE GONE BEYOND THIS LIFE

AND I HAVE GONE NOWHERE.

ON AND ON

BY MANTRA DAS

I AM THOUGHT

I AM FEELING

I AM PASSING

AND ARISING

ON AND ON AND ON AND ON

IN THE DARK

OR ON THE EDGE OF A ROOF

A BLADE OF GRASS

IN A SHADOW

IN A FIRE

A SHOOT OF BAMBOO

A TREE IN A SNOWSTORM

FALLING WATER

OR FALLING SNOW

A FLOWER OPENING

ON THE FIRST DAY OF SPRING

THE LAST DAY OF WINTER

IN A FIELD AT NIGHT

IN THE CITY BY DAY

A SNAIL ON THE SIDEWALK

ON A ROCK IN THE SUN

A STICK ON A BRANCH

A FEATHER ON THE GROUND

A CLOUD PASSING BY I AM THOUGHT

I AM FEELING

I AM PASSING

AND ARISING.

SHADOWY WORLD

LOST CAUSES

THE RENAISSANCE

THE DARK AGES

ON AND ON (PART 2)

BY MANTRA DAS

LET 'S SEE:

THE RENAISSANCE:

A TIME OF NEW DISCOVERIES

A TIME OF NEW PERSPECTIVES

A TIME OF NEW HOPE

THE DARK AGES:

A TIME OF NEW IDEAS

A TIME OF NEW ART

A TIME OF NEW HOPE

THE WORST:

A TIME OF NEW LOVE

A TIME OF NEW HAPPINESS

A TIME OF NEW HOPE.

THE MALL, 2002

BY MANTRA DAS

I SEARCHED FOR MEANING IN THE TOWERING GREEK PILLARS OF WESTLAND MALL.
WHY DID I COME HERE— WAS IT THIS BAD?
TELL ME OF THE WONDERS OUTSIDE OF THIS TOWN.
TOMORROW WILL BE THE FIRST TIME
I'LL SEE A PERSON I'VE NEVER MET FACE TO FACE.
I WANT TO FEEL THE RUSH OF HUMANITY
AND KNOW THEY ARE NOT ANY DIFFERENT THAN ME.
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'M GOING SOMEWHERE
OUTSIDE OF MY TOWN AND IT IS A HALF AN HOUR DRIVE.
I AM WAITING TO PASS THROUGH SECURITY BECAUSE I FORGOT
IN MY JITTERS I LEFT THE METAL G-CLASP THAT HOLDS
MY NECKLACE CLOSED AT HOME. MY HANDS ARE SHAKING.
THE WOMAN BEHIND THE GLASS LOOKS ME UP AND DOWN.
SHE SEES MY DISTRESS AND MY SWEATING PALMS. SHE HOLDS MY EYES UNTIL SHE GLANCES AWAY.
SHE KNOWS I'M NOT A THREAT TO HER OR HER FAMILY.
MY HEART IS RACING, AND I FEEL LIKE I AM ABOUT TO CRY AGAIN,
BUT I HOLD IT IN FOR NOW BECAUSE I'M ALMOST SAFE.

INTO THE FOREST OF THE SPIRITS

BY MANTRA DAS

KRISHNA, BRINGER OF FORTUNE
GLIMMERING GOLD CEILING
WITHSTAND THIS PILGRIMAGE
HOMEWARD TO THE VILLAGE OF MY YOUTH
I MUST NOW PROCEED
WITH NO FEAR OR REGRET
AS I WALK THE PATH OF SPRING
I MUST NOW PROCEED
MY PAST IS BEHIND ME
AND I AM ITS MASTER
I HAVE TAKEN LEAVE OF MY SENSES
AND ALL MY GODS
AND THIS DAY I WILL WALK IN A TRANCE
INTO THE FOREST OF THE SPIRITS.
KRISHNA, BRINGER OF FORTUNE
GLIMMERING GOLD CEILING
WITHSTAND THIS PILGRIMAGE
HOMEWARD TO THE VILLAGE OF MY YOUTH
I MUST NOW PROCEED
WITH NO FEAR OR REGRET
AS I WALK THE PATH OF SPRING
I MUST NOW PROCEED
MY PAST IS BEHIND ME
AND I AM ITS MASTER
I HAVE TAKEN LEAVE OF MY SENSES
AND ALL MY GODS
AND THIS DAY I WILL WALK IN A TRANCE
INTO THE FOREST OF THE SPIRITS.

THE ISSUE OF ANTETHESISM

BY MANTRA DAS

A THOUSAND FRIENDS COME AND GONE
FACES DISSOLVE INTO SUFFICIENT QUARANTINE BUNKERS
HOLDING ONTO THE OLD WAYS
FINGERS SLIPPING
BACK AND FORTH INTO THE OLD WAYS
THE OLD WAYS
THEY WILL REMEMBER THEIR OWN WAY
LIGHTNING STRIKE, OR THE WAY THINGS ARE DONE
THE ISSUE OF ANTETHESISM
THIS IS THE ISSUE OF ANTETHESISM.

WASHBURN

BY MANTRA DAS

I HAD AN OLD ELECTRIC GUITAR

IT WAS A WASHBURN

I LEANT IT TO A GUY AFTER WE JAMMED

I NEVER SAW IT AGAIN

I TOLD HIM HE COULD KEEP IT BECAUSE I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO ASK FOR IT BACK

I JUST ASSUMED HE WOULD

HE DIDN'T COME BACK

I NEVER SAW HIM AGAIN EITHER

THE GUITAR WAS A WASHBURN

I WANTED IT BACK, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO ASK FOR IT BACK

I THOUGHT ABOUT ASKING AROUND THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

IT SEEMED AWKWARD, I TRIED TO GET IT OUT OF MY HEAD.

MY MOM AND I NEVER TALKED ABOUT IT. I DIDN'T HAVE THAT KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WITH HER.

I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO SAY HER NAME

I WAS A KID

I DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO SAY HER NAME

I WAS A KID

A WASHBURN.

I AM A WARRIOR

BY MANTRA DAS

ALL MY LIFE I HAVE BEEN FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL,
THE WAR IS INSIDE OF ME, AND IT IS ALL CONSUMING.
BUT I WILL NOT SURRENDER.

I AM A WARRIOR.

I WILL OVERCOME.

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN MISUNDERSTOOD,
AND PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS LOOKED AT ME STRANGELY.
BUT I WILL NOT SURRENDER.

I AM A WARRIOR.

I WILL OVERCOME.

IN THE EYES OF THE WORLD I AM A NOBODY,
BUT IN THE EYES OF GOD I AM SOMEBODY.
AND IT IS UP TO ME TO MAKE MY LIFE WORTH LIVING.

I AM A WARRIOR.

I WILL OVERCOME.

CRACKER JACK BOX

BY MANTRA DAS

MY FINGERS CAKED IN DIRT AND CARAMEL
DIGGING THROUGH THE CRACKER JACK BOX
WISHING FOR SOMETHING SPECTACULAR
SOMETHING WORTHY OF THIS
EYES SEARCHING MY MOTHER 'S FACE
FOR SOME SIGN OF APPROVAL
SOMETHING TO SHOW I ' M ON THE RIGHT TRACK
OR I ' M ON THE RIGHT TRACK
LAUGHTER AND SMILES FOR ALL THE WRONG REASONS
STARING INTO THE MIDDLE DISTANCE
COUNTING THE MINUTES UNTIL WE GO HOME
SO I CAN TASTE THE PRIZE INSIDE THE BOX AGAIN

THE LYING ROBOT

BY MANTRA DAS

JUST LIKE IN MOVIES ABOUT THE FUTURE
AUTONOMOUS GRUB HUB DELIVERY ROBOTS NAVIGATE THE ROADS
AS IN THE MOVIES, DYSTOPIA
BUSTLING ROBOTS WITH THICK TREADS AND TIRES
AUTONOMOUS BUT NOT YET SENTIENT
WHY NOT MAKE THE ROBOT A LIAR?
WITHOUT THE CAPACITY TO FEEL,
THE ROBOT COULD BE A MASTER OF MISDIRECTION
A PERSON COULD SAY, "I NEED A HEART TRANSPLANT"
AND THE ROBOT'S SHINY HEAD WOULD NOD IN AGREEMENT
THE DELIVERY ROBOT CAN GO ANYWHERE
INTO A HOSPITAL OR A HOUSE
INTO A ROOM OF OLD PEOPLE DYING
OR INTO A CROWDED BAR
AND IF SOMEONE ASKS, "DO YOU HAVE A HEART FOR ME?"
THE ROBOT'S SHINY HEAD WOULD NOD IN AGREEMENT.

THE WASTE LAND

BY MANTRA DAS

AT THE DAWN OF TIME MOTHER TURTLE GAVE BIRTH TO THE UNIVERSE
HER SHELL BECAME THE VIBRATING PINPOINT STARS
HER EYES BECAME THE SALTY STIRRING OCEANS
HER ARMS AND LEGS BECAME THE MOUNTAIN LANDS
THE SUN SETS WHEN SHE RETIRES INTO HER SHELL
THE WARM GLOW FROM THE SUN
AND MOON IS THE REFLECTION OF HER EYES
THE BIRDS THAT FLY THROUGH THE SKY ARE HER CHILDREN
THE BUGS AND GRASS ARE HER HAIR
AT NIGHT SHE CLOSES HER EYES AND GOES TO SLEEP FOR A THOUSAND YEARS
HER DREAMS BECOME THE GALAXIES
THE PLANETS SPINNING IN SPACE ARE HER DREAMS
THE ROCKS AND MINERALS IN THE GROUND ARE THE DUST FROM HER SKIN
THE OCEANS SURROUNDING THE LAND ARE THE TEARS SHE CRIES WHEN SHE IS SAD
THE RAIN THAT FALLS FROM THE SKY IS HER TEARS
THE WAVES THAT CRASH ON THE SAND ARE HER TEARS
THE WIND THAT BLOWS THROUGH THE TREES IS HER HAIR

OUTSTANDING YOUNG WOMEN

BY MANTRA DAS

I LOST TRACK OF MY KEYS IN A DARK RAINY PARKING LOT
I CAN NEVER FIND MY CAR, LET ALONE MY GODDAMN KEYS
MY PHONE IS ALMOST DEAD
THE STORE IS CLOSING SOON
RETRACING MY STEPS
I 'M STUCK ON THE SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF THE TACO PLACE
I REMEMBER SWEARING AT A SQUIRREL IN THE PARKING LOT
IT WAS RUNNING FROM MY CAR TO A TREE, LIKE IT THOUGHT IT WAS FREE
I COULDN 'T STOP MY CAR IN TIME, I WAS FEELING TOO GOOD ABOUT MYSELF
THE SQUIRREL WAS JUST TRYING TO GET HOME. I WANTED TO GET TACOS
I WANTED TO LET IT GO AND I COULDN 'T. IT RAN OUT IN FRONT OF ME
THE VOICE IN MY HEAD SAYS, "THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN YOU."
THE BUILDING ACROSS FROM THE TACO PLACE HAS A HUGE SCREEN
MY PHONE HAS DIED, I HAVE NO WAY OF LOOKING UP THE TIME
THERE IS NO ONE ON THE STREET AND THE STREETS ARE EMPTY
I AM ALONE, I KEEP THINKING THAT I 'M GOING TO MISS MY TRAIN
THE VOICE IN MY HEAD SAYS, "EVERYONE IS WATCHING."
I 'M STILL SWEATING FROM WALKING SO FAST AND I FEEL HEAVY
MY CLOTHES ARE TOO TIGHT AND MY HAIR NEVER LOOKS RIGHT
I 'M NOT SUPPOSED TO BE HERE LIKE THIS. MY HANDS SWEAT
MY FRIENDS DON 'T LIKE ME WITHOUT MAKEUP. THEY DON 'T UNDERSTAND.
THE VOICE IN MY HEAD WILL NOT STOP SAYING, "YOU ARE NOT GOOD ENOUGH."
THE STREETS ARE EMPTY, BUT IT FEELS LIKE EVERYONE IS STARING AT ME.
I AM AFRAID THAT I AM GOING TO THROW UP. THE STORE IS ALMOST CLOSED.
THE VOICE IN MY HEAD SAYS, "YOU ARE NOT GOOD ENOUGH FOR TACOS."
I REMEMBER THAT I HAD FORGOTTEN A BAG FOR MY KEYS SO I COULD NOT GET TACOS
I HAD TO SIT DOWN ON THE CURB FOR A MOMENT BECAUSE I FELT SO SICK.

THE LAND WAS OUR MOTHER

BY MANTRA DAS

FOR MEN, ANGER MAKES SENSE
WHEN ENOUGH PEOPLE ARE ANGRY
THEN THERE IS A WAR TO TRANSFORM THE ANGER INTO GENTLE SADNESS
THE LIVES OF BRAVE YOUNG MEN SACRIFICED
TO THE GREAT DEITY, MARS
THE LAND WAS OUR MOTHER
THE LAND WAS OUR MOTHER

THE WOMAN, HER WORK WAS NEVER DONE
AND SHE RAN ON A TREADMILL, FOREVER
MANY MOUTHS TO FEED, ALWAYS
SHE HAD A STRONG BACK, SHE COULD BEND INTO THE WIND
WE WERE LAZY BOYS AND NEVER APPRECIATED HER ENOUGH
UNTIL IT WAS TOO LATE.

ODE TO A HOT WIND

BY MANTRA DAS

A WARM SOUTHERN WIND SWEEPS THROUGH THE SCREEN PORCH
OUTSIDE IS A WHEAT FIELD AND THE SHAMBLES OF A BARN
A TWO-LANE STATE ROUTE RUNNING PARALLEL TO A GRAVEL ROAD
COWS GROW FAT TO BE SOLD FOR MEAT
I AM SEARCHING FOR THE HEART OF AMERICA
I THINK IT IS THIS WIND
IT IS THE SMELL OF HAY AND THE SOUND OF INSECTS
THE FEEL OF SWEAT AND THE TASTE OF BEER
THE PAST IS CLOSE
I REMEMBER MY GRANDFATHER WALKING ON A ROAD IN NORTH CAROLINA
A BLACK MAN IN A WHITE MAN'S WORLD
HE HAD A STRONG BACK AND COULD WORK HARD
HE WAS A SHARECROPPER, A TENANT FARMER
HIS HANDS WERE CALLOUSED AND HIS CLOTHES WERE RAGS
HE WAS TOLD HE WAS NOT AS GOOD AS OTHERS BECAUSE OF THE COLOR OF HIS SKIN
THE WIND BLOWS THROUGH THE SCREEN PORCH
I ASK IT TO TAKE ME TO MY GRANDFATHER
I WANT TO HEAR HIS VOICE AGAIN

THE MYSTERY OF UNDERSEA EARTH

BY MANTRA DAS

I CROSSED THE WOODEN FENCE INTO A SACRED SPACE
SCANNING THE PATH FOR WITNESSES
I FOUND NONE
THE SOUND OF AN OWL- WAS IT REAL?
THE EARTH MANTRA RISING FROM THE DIRT IN ALL SINCERITY
I WAS NOT SUPPOSED TO BE HERE
I KNEW TOO MUCH ABOUT THE FORESTED GROUNDS
I KNEW TOO MUCH ABOUT THE PAST
I KNEW TOO MUCH ABOUT THE FUTURE
SUDDENLY, A GUST OF WIND BLEW FROM BEHIND ME-
I WAS NOT ALONE
I HAD BEEN FOLLOWED, FOLLOWED HERE TO THIS PLACE
MY EYES TURNED TOWARDS THE OCEAN, A REFLECTION OF A MEMORY FROM CHILDHOOD
ALL OF A SUDDEN, I COULD HEAR A FAMILIAR VOICE
IT WAS MY MOTHER'S VOICE; SHE WAS SPEAKING TO ME - IN WORDS
SHE WOULD NEVER HAVE KNOWN I COULD HAVE UNDERSTOOD.
"WE ARE ALL ONE BLOOD" SHE SAID - I COULD FEEL HER BREATH ON MY NECK AS SHE SPOKE THESE WORDS.
"AND ONE SPIRIT" SHE CONTINUED- "IT IS IN OUR BLOOD AND SPIRIT THAT WE MUST REMEMBER."
A TEAR FELL FROM MY EYES. SHE WAS STILL HERE, WITH ME, TAKING ME ON THIS JOURNEY.
I FELT HER PRESENCE. I TURNED AROUND AND SAW HER FACE- BEAUTIFUL AND STRONG.

SHE WAS BEHIND ME... SHE WAS ALWAYS BEHIND ME, ALWAYS LOOKING OUT FOR ME.
I FELT LIKE I WAS BEING CALLED HOME.
I FELT THE WEIGHT OF MY BODY RISE.
I FELT MY FEET TOUCH THE GROUND.
I WAS NOT SUPPOSED TO BE THERE.
I WAS NOT SUPPOSED TO BE THERE.
I WAS NOT SUPPOSED TO BE THERE.
I WAS NOT SUPPOSED TO BE THERE.

A PEACE-PIPE

BY MANTRA DAS

IN A MANIC FRENZY, I TRIED TO SAVE THE WORLD
TO END WARS ONCE AND FOR ALL
I THOUGHT I COULD DO IT BUT THAT WAS BEFORE
I WAS IDEALISTIC THEN, BUT NOW JADED AND WISE
ST. JUDE, PRAY FOR THE WORLD, A LOST CAUSE
THE WORLD TODAY IS A MESS
I CAN 'T FIX IT ANYMORE
I CAN 'T DO IT ANYMORE
PRAY FOR THE WORLD
PRAY FOR PEACE

NO OTHER GUEST

BY MANTRA DAS

I WAS A TOURIST AT THE HOTEL UTAH
OPEN MIC NIGHT IN A CROWDED MISSION DISTRICT BAR
I FELT LIKE A SOMEBODY JUST BY BEING IN THAT SPACE
LIKE IT WAS HOLLYWOOD AND I DESERVED TO BE THERE
DRUNK AND ON THE VERGE OF PISSING MY PANTS WHILE WAITING
FOR MY TURN TO SING I SUCKED ON THE LAST GULP
OF MY BEER AND TRIED TO REMEMBER MY LYRICS
WHEN IT WAS MY TURN I STUMBLED THROUGH A FEW LINES
OF MY ORIGINAL SONG BEFORE THE CROWD STARTED CLAPPING
AND I SMILED AND BOWED AND CLAPPED BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT YOU DO
WHEN PEOPLE APPLAUD YOU EVEN WHEN THEY DON'T REALLY MEAN IT
I WENT BACK TO MY TABLE OF FRIENDS AND DRANK ANOTHER BEER
AND LAUGHED AT THE TOURISTS WHO THOUGHT THEY WERE IN SOME
SORT OF COWBOY BAR IN WYOMING OR MONTANA OR SOME OTHER STATE
I DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO THE NEXT DAY SO I SLEPT IN LATE
AND THEN WENT TO A DINER FOR A \$5.00 BREAKFAST THAT WASN'T VERY GOOD AT ALL
THEN I HEADED TO THE BART STATION AND BOARDED A TRAIN FOR HOME

CITYSCAPE

BY MANTRA DAS

POST APOCALYPTIC MOUNTAINSIDE CITYSCAPES

FREEWAYS FULL OF ABANDONED CARS

OREGON HIGHWAY NEAR MT. HOOD

HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN TO ME?

I WAS A GOOD PERSON

I WAS DIFFERENT THAN THE OTHERS

I COULD HAVE BEEN SOMEONE

OR SOMETHING

SOMETHING GOOD

SOMETHING STRONGER

MORE CONFIDENT AND DETERMINED THAN THE REST

I USED TO TRAVEL HERE

TO THIS MOUNTAIN PASS

TO CLEAR MY HEAD

AND ESCAPE THE OTHERWORLDLY ATMOSPHERE

I USED TO CLEAR MY HEAD

WHILE ON THE TURNPIKE TO SAN FRANCISCO

IT STARTED WITH A STUPID ACT

BUT THE DAMAGE IT CAUSED BECAME

SIGNIFICANT

NOT THE ACT ITSELF BUT THE AFTER EFFECTS

THE TRICKS AND LIES IT PLANTED IN MY HEAD

THE COMPLEX INNER WORLD THAT WAS TRAPPED WITHIN ME

AND SO I DOVE DEEP INTO THAT ILLUSION

INTO ITS SNAKEPIT OF ENTRAPMENT

INTO THE LIGHTLESS CAVERNS OF MY MADNESS

TO EXPERIENCE SOMETHING DIFFERENT

SOMETHING NEW

SOMETHING DIFFERENT

SOMETHING NEW

SOMETHING DIFFERENT

THE CATTY GIRLS, 1904

BY MANTRA DAS

AT MY SCHOOL THERE ARE CATTY GIRLS
THEY CALL ME NAMES AND ROLL THEIR EYES AT ME
I WISH I COULD JUST DISAPPEAR
NO MATTER WHERE I GO THERE ARE CATTY LITTLE GIRLS
CALLING ME NAMES
THEY STEAL MY STUFF
THEY SPREAD RUMORS ABOUT ME
I FEEL SO ALONE
I WISH I HAD A FRIEND
TO LAUGH AND PLAY WITH ME
I WISH I HAD A FRIEND
DON'T JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS COVER
YOU CAN BE NICE TO ME TOO
DON'T ROLL YOUR EYES AT ME
IF YOU WANT TO BE MY FRIEND, WE CAN HANG OUT TOGETHER
I AM NICE TO YOU TOO
DON'T STEAL MY THINGS
DON'T SPREAD RUMORS ABOUT ME.

THE ART OF CONVERSATION

BY MANTRA DAS

I TRY TO SPARK A CONVERSATION WITH A STRANGER OUTSIDE OUR BUILDING
THE WEATHER COMES TO MIND, BUT NOTHING ELSE
'IT WAS SO NICE EARLIER, BUT NOW I FEEL COLD— THIS WEATHER'
THE NEWS IS FULL OF TRAGEDY AND CONTROVERSY
THE WEATHER IS A SAFE THING
A CONVERSATION STARTER.
I AM IN THE ELEVATOR WITH A MAN I HAVE NEVER SEEN BEFORE
HE IS ROUGHLY MY AGE, MAYBE OLDER OR YOUNGER
'IT WAS SO NICE EARLIER, BUT NOW I FEEL COLD— THIS WEATHER'
I AM TRYING TO SPARK A CONVERSATION WITH A STRANGER
THE WEATHER IS TOO EASY AND TOO BORING
I DESPERATELY LOOK FOR SOMETHING ELSE TO SAY.
THE ELEVATOR DINGS, THE DOORS OPEN.
WE BOTH WALK OUR SEPARATE WAYS.

POEM 25

HI MR. CARPENTER DOWN THE STREET

HI NEIGHBOR UP THE STREET

HI DOG NEXT DOOR

HI BIRD BY THE WINDOW

HI MOM

HI DAD

HI BROTHER

HI SISTER

HI FAMILY

HI FRIENDS

HI

THE TRUTH ABOUT SHAME

BY MANTRA DAS

KRISHNA PROTECT ME FROM THE HIDDEN FIRE
THE CLAWING TAXIDERMY LION'S PAW
I FEEL ASHAMED OF THE DRAMA THAT I CAUSE
PROTECT MY EGO, KRISHNA, FROM BEING BRUISED
SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE A WOUNDED ANIMAL
MY THOUGHTS RUN IN CIRCLES,
WHEN I LOOK INTO THE MIRROR
I SEE MY MOTHER'S FACE
I AM A BAD PERSON
PROTECT ME FROM THE SLITHERING SNAKES OF MY MIND
KEEP ME SAFE FROM THE BLACK MAGIC THAT LURKS IN EVERY CORNER.

ST. JUDE

BY MANTRA DAS

ST. JUDE, I PRAY FOR YOUR FAVOR
PATRON SAINT OF LOST CAUSES
I PRAY TO BE HEALED OF MY PERSONALITY
RELIEVE ME OF MY SENSE OF SELF
BRING ME TO MY KNEES AND REMOVE ALL OF MY BELONGINGS
PLEASE LET ME BE OKAY WITH NOTHING
I PRAY FOR MY VOICE TO BE A WHISPER
I PRAY FOR MY WORDS TO HARM NO ONE
LET ME BE AN OPEN SPACE WHERE OTHERS CAN WRITE THEIR OWN HISTORY
PLEASE ST. JUDE, BRING ME OUT OF MY BODY
PLEASE LET ME DISAPPEAR
MAKE ME AN ALTAR OF BONES, A SHRINE OF HAIR
LET ME BE A BLANK SPACE
LET ME DISAPPEAR WITHOUT A TRACE
I PRAY THAT I AM HERE AND NOT THERE
I PRAY TO BE FORGOTTEN BY EVERYONE AND EVERYTHING
I PRAY FOR YOUR FAVOR
ST. JUDE, PLEASE SHOW ME SOME GRACE.

CREATURE OF THE DESERT

BY MANTRA DAS

TWISTING THE LID WITH A SENSE OF PURPOSE
THE COOL SWEAT OF THE BOTTLE
ANTICIPATION
FEELING THE MALT LIQUOR ENJOYABLY BURN
GUZZLING QUICKLY TO A PLACE WHERE I CAN BE CALM
MOUTH AND THROAT NUMB
THE WARM BUZZ ARISES
FEELING THE COOLNESS OF THE COUCH
THE WEIGHT OF A MOVIE PLAYING IN MY HEAD
THE BLACKNESS OF THE TV SCREEN
I ' M REPLAYING A SUMMER DAY, THE SMELL OF CHLORINE
SWIMMING IN MY MIND
I ' M WITH MY COUSINS, MAKING FUN OF GIRLS WE DON ' T KNOW
MY COUSINS ARE MY BEST FRIENDS
WE ' RE GROWING UP TOGETHER, AND EVERYTHING IS PERFECT
THE NEXT DAY I ' M BACK AT SCHOOL
ALREADY MISSING MY COUSINS AND THE SUMMER DAY
I ' M LIVING IN A GLASS HOUSE, I SEE EVERYTHING, BUT I FEEL NOTHING.

THE UNRETURNED

BY MANTRA DAS

I SOMETIMES FEEL LIKE AN AUTOMATON
LIKE IN THE PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN RIDE AT DISNEY WORLD
MY ARMS AND LEGS MOVE, FOLLOWING THE INEVITABLE PATH IN FRONT OF ME
DOES A ROBOT PIRATE HAVE A SOUL?
MY EMOTIONS RATTLE AND BUZZ LIKE A BLOWN-OUT SUBWOOFER
THEY ARE TOO BIG FOR THEIR TINY CAGE
I HAVE NO CONTROL OVER THEM
THEY'RE NOT MINE
THEY BELONG TO THE MAN STANDING NEXT TO ME
AND I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH THEM
THERE ARE NOT MY OWN ANYMORE
THEY'RE LIKE A COAT THAT DOESN'T FIT, A PAIR OF SHOES THAT PINCH MY TOES
MY EMOTIONS ARE SOMEONE ELSE'S NOW
BECAUSE I NEVER LEARNED HOW TO TAKE CARE OF THEM
I TOLD MYSELF THAT I DIDN'T CARE ABOUT ANYONE OR ANYTHING
THAT THEY DIDN'T MATTER TO ME, THAT THEY WEREN'T WORTH MY TIME OR ENERGY OR WORRY
I SHUT DOWN AND PUT AWAY MY FEELINGS LIKE A NEAT KITCHEN AFTER A DINNER PARTY IS OVER.
I CAN'T REMEMBER IF I EVEN LOCKED THE DOOR BEHIND ME WHEN I LEFT.
NOW ALL THESE FEELINGS ARE RATTLING AROUND INSIDE ME, GETTING IN THE WAY OF EVERYTHING ELSE.
IT'S HARD TO KEEP DOING WHAT I USED TO DO WITH SUCH EASE.
MY EMOTIONS HAVE TAKEN OVER MY BODY. MY BODY IS NO LONGER MINE.

THE LUNCHBOX

BY MANTRA DAS

ON DRUGS, I LOST MY INHIBITIONS
FOR BETTER OR WORSE, I BROADCAST MY UNFILTERED INNER EXPERIENCE TO THE WORLD
THE WORLD RECOILED IN DISGUST
'HE SHOULD NOT TAKE DRUGS' THEY ALL SAID
I SHEEPISHLY APOLOGIZED FOR BEING ME, THEN WIDE-EYED, BLAMED THE DRUGS
I GOT MY SHIT TOGETHER, FOUND SOME FRIENDS
FRIENDS WHO UNDERSTOOD ME, WHO LET ME BE ME, WHO DIDN'T JUDGE ME
THE DRUGS WERE GONE AND I WAS HAPPY THAT I WAS NO LONGER A DRUG-ADDLED MESS
BUT THEN I LOST MY INHIBITIONS AGAIN
I'M A MESS, I'M A DRUG-ADDLED MESS
THE WORLD RECOILED IN DISGUST
'HE SHOULD NOT TAKE DRUGS' THEY ALL SAID
I SHEEPISHLY APOLOGIZED FOR BEING ME, THEN WIDE-EYED, BLAMED THE DRUGS
I GOT MY SHIT TOGETHER, FOUND SOME FRIENDS
THE SAME FRIENDS WHO UNDERSTOOD ME, WHO LET ME BE ME, WHO DIDN'T JUDGE ME
'HE SHOULD NOT TAKE DRUGS' THEY ALL SAID AGAIN
I SHEEPISHLY APOLOGIZED FOR BEING ME, THEN WIDE-EYED, BLAMED THE DRUGS
I GOT MY SHIT TOGETHER, FOUND SOME NEW FRIENDS
FRIENDS WHO UNDERSTOOD ME, WHO LET ME BE ME, WHO DIDN'T JUDGE ME
THE DRUGS WERE GONE AND I WAS HAPPY THAT I WAS NO LONGER A DRUG-ADDLED MESS
BUT THEN I LOST MY INHIBITIONS AGAIN
I'M A MESS, I'M A DRUG-ADDLED MESS.

TRANSLATING THE VIRUS

BY MANTRA DAS

AT THE START OF THE VIRUS, MY YOUNG DAUGHTERS AND I BURNED CANDLES
FIVE NOVENA CANDLES OF ST. MICHAEL
WE PRAYED THAT WE WOULD NOT CATCH THE DEADLY VIRUS
AFTER MANY MONTHS, AND AFTER BEING VACCINATED, WE ALL CAUGHT COVID
IT WAS NO BIG DEAL
BUT THE GIRLS HAVE BEEN PERPETUALLY EXHAUSTED SINCE THEN.
WITHOUT REST, THEY HAVE BEEN RUNNING AROUND IN CIRCLES, LAUGHING AND SMILING
BUT SOMETIMES THEIR SMILES MAKE ME THINK OF THE VIRUS
BECAUSE THE VIRUS IS A GOOD ACTOR, IT CAN PRETEND TO BE GOOD AND SWEET
BUT I KNOW THAT IT IS JUST PRETENDING
AND SOMEDAY, I WILL TELL MY DAUGHTERS ABOUT THE VIRUS
I WILL TELL THEM THAT IT WAS THE BEST LESSON OF MY LIFE
THE VIRUS TAUGHT ME HOW TO BOTH LOVE AND HATE IT
IT ALSO TAUGHT ME HOW TO TURN ALL OF MY HATRED INTO LOVE
IN ORDER TO NOT BE CONSUMED BY MY HATRED, I LEARNED HOW TO LOVE EVERYTHING I HATED
THAT'S WHY I'M STILL ALIVE TODAY, BECAUSE I LEARNED HOW TO LOVE AND FORGIVE THE VIRUS
AND NOW I'M GOING TO TRANSLATE THIS POEM INTO SPANISH
BECAUSE I WANT ALL OF US TO BE ABLE TO UNDERSTAND IT.

JOURNEY HOME

BY MANTRA DAS

WHENEVER I AM WITH SOMEONE, I PRETEND TO BE WHAT THEY WANT ME TO BE
IT IS AN AUTOMATIC THING, MY NATURE IS TO MIMIC IN REACTION TO OTHERS
MY BELIEFS ARE WHAT YOU TELL ME
I HOLD MANY CONFLICTING VIEWS
I WILL BOW DOWN AND BEG FOR YOUR ACCEPTANCE

WHEN I AM ALONE, I AM AN ANIMAL
I KNOW WHAT I WANT AND WHAT I NEED
I AM BRAVE, I WILL FIGHT RECKLESSLY FOR MY BELIEFS
I AM A HUMAN BEING
I HAVE HAD MANY EXPERIENCES, SOME I WISH TO RELIVE
SOME I WISH NEVER HAPPENED

THIS IS MY JOURNEY HOME, TO MY ORIGINS, TO RETURN TO THE WOMB
SO THAT I MAY BE REBORN
THIS IS MY JOURNEY HOME, TO FIND MYSELF
SO THAT I MAY LOVE MYSELF
THIS IS MY JOURNEY HOME, TO BECOME ONE WITH EVERYTHING AROUND ME
SO THAT I MAY BE WHOLE.

A SUMMER ANGEL

BY MANTRA DAS

ONCE, IN STILLNESS, I HAD A VISION OF AN ANGEL
A VISION OF OUR LADY WITH SMALL POINTY BLUE FEATHERS FOR ARMS
I THOUGHT OF TIBET
AM I A MYSTIC, A CHILD, OR MENTALLY ILL?
NOBODY BELIEVES THAT I COULD SEE AN ANGEL
I WASN'T A VIRGIN, SO WAS I JUST CONFUSED?
I WAS NOT CONFUSED.
WE WERE LIVING IN A POOR NEIGHBORHOOD WITH AN ANGEL WHO APPEARED
IN THE MOON OF OUR BEDROOM WINDOW. OUR BEDROOM WINDOW, WHERE WE MADE LOVE.
I TOOK THE ANGEL FOR GRANTED.
I'M NOT SURE THAT I EVEN BELIEVED THAT IT WAS AN ANGEL
THE WAY I BELIEVED IN GOD.
THE ANGEL LEFT FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW.
IT WAS THERE FOR FIFTEEN YEARS, AS LONG AS WE WERE MARRIED, AND THEN IT DISAPPEARED.
WHEN MY HUSBAND DIED, OUR ANGEL REAPPEARED.
MY SON SAYS I DON'T SEE ANGELS ANYMORE, BUT I STILL SEE OUR LADY.
I LOVE HER. I'M COMFORTED BY HER PRESENCE. SHE IS AN ANCHOR IN THE STORM OF GRIEVING.
I CALL HER MY SUMMER ANGEL BECAUSE SHE APPEARED AROUND SUMMERTIME.

" -- "

THE COYOTE SPIRIT

BY MANTRA DAS

OH NOBLE COYOTE SPIRIT
BRINGER OF BRAVERY AND SECOND CHANCES
THE ULTIMATE FOOL, CAST ASIDE BY WOLVES
INSTINCTIVELY FEASTING UPON ANYTHING CONVENIENT
THE HUMBLE TRICKSTER SPIRIT
WHO STEALS THE SPOTLIGHT
THE ILL-PREPARED RINGLEADER OF MISADVENTURE
THE FIRST TO TEMPT
THE FIRST TO FALL
THE FIRST TO BE CONSUMED BY HIS OWN GREED
I CAN 'T HEAR YOUR HOWL,
I CAN 'T SMELL YOUR MUSK
I CAN 'T TASTE YOUR FUR.
WITHOUT YOU, I AM LOST
A MAN ON FIRE IN A WOODEN CAGE
A PREDATOR IN AN EMPTY FOREST.
I WANT YOU TO LEAD ME TO THE WATER HOLE
AND I WANT TO FOLLOW.
A WISE ELDER ONCE SAID,
"WHAT IS MISSING IN THE PATTERN IS AS IMPORTANT AS WHAT IS THERE."
AND SO IT IS WITH YOU, NOBLE COYOTE SPIRIT.
NOW I SEE THE PATTERN.
NOW I SEE THE UNSPEAKABLE BEAUTY IN THE ABSENCE.
BRINGER OF BRAVERY AND SECOND CHANCES,
THE ULTIMATE FOOL, CAST ASIDE BY WOLVES,
INSTINCTIVELY FEASTING UPON ANYTHING CONVENIENT—
I AM YOU.

KRISHNA

BY MANTRA DAS

I ATTENDED A PUJA AT KRISHNA'S VEDIC TEMPLE

A THREE YEAR OLD INDIAN BOY IN A KRISHNA T-SHIRT PLAYED THE BONGO DRUMS

I DANCED AND SMILED AT HIM, QUICKLY RETURNING TO AUSTERITY

I ENCOUNTERED KRISHNA THAT DAY AT THE TEMPLE

I SWEAR THAT I ENCOUNTERED GOD

I WAS OVERTAKEN BY AN INDESCRIBABLE FEELING IN MY BODY, LIKE A WAVE TRAVELING FROM MY FEET TO MY HEAD

IT TOOK ME OUT OF MYSELF, AND I WANTED TO STAY IN THAT STATE

I WANTED TO DIE OR STAY THERE FOREVER AND NEVER COME BACK

THE BOY LAUGHED AT ME AND PLAYED THE DRUMS.

I CRIED, BUT THEY WERE TEARS OF JOY.

THE MOMENT PASSED, AND I RETURNED TO THE WORLD

BUT I WILL NEVER FORGET IT.

SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN

BY MANTRA DAS

NO COMBINATION OF DRUGS CAN EVER CHANGE WHO I AM
MY ANXIETY RANGES FROM WHITE NOISE TO UNBEARABLE
MY DEPRESSION COMES AND GOES LIKE RAIN IN THE RAINY SEASON
THE DOCTORS AND PSYCHIATRISTS ARE CARING BUT USELESS
I ACCEPT THIS AS MY FATE, AS KARMA
I TRY TO FILL MY TIME WITH YOGA AND MEDITATION, BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH
I HAVE TO FIGURE OUT WHO I AM
I'VE HAD EPIPHANIES THAT I COULD BE LIVING A LIFE OF WANTON INDULGENCE
I COULD BE STUDYING SOMETHING I LOVE, LIKE ASTRONOMY, OR HISTORY
MAYBE IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL
MAYBE I'M JUST AFRAID OF FAILURE
I THINK I LIVE IN A PRISON OF MY OWN MAKING
IF ONLY ONE PERSON READS THIS I WILL CONSIDER MY LIFE WORTH LIVING

THE BASKAKANBISHI

BY MANTRA DAS

IF YOU MEET THE BUDDHA ON THE ROAD

KILL HIM

I HATE THE BUDDHA MORE THAN ANYTHING, FOR TELLING THE TRUTH

LIFE IS SUFFERING, BUT ENJOY THE STRAWBERRY

OLD AGE AND ILLNESS HAVE COME SO SOON

I HAVE NO TIME FOR THE QUICK-WITTED

OR THE BEAUTIFUL

I HAVE NO TIME FOR THE YOUNG AND THE SICKLY

OR THE OLD AND THE UGLY

I DO NOT WANT TO BE LIKE THIS IN THE FUTURE

I DO NOT WANT TO SUFFER OR BE SICK AND OLD

I DO NOT WANT TO DIE

I HATE THE BUDDHA

FOR SAYING THIS IS HOW IT IS, THIS IS HOW YOU ARE

THIS IS HOW YOU ARE, YOU ARE NO ONE SPECIAL, YOU ARE NO BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE

YOU ARE ALL GOING TO DIE, BUT THAT'S OK BECAUSE THAT IS HOW IT IS

PEOPLE WILL TRY TO TELL YOU OTHERWISE, BUT THEY ARE WRONG

PEOPLE WILL SAY THERE IS A WAY OUT OF THIS SUFFERING, BUT THERE ISN'T, THERE ISN'T ANY WAY OUT

SUFFERING IS SUFFERING AND THERE IS NO WAY AROUND IT, SO IF YOU MEET THE BUDDHA ON THE ROAD KILL HIM

DO NOT BELIEVE IN ANYTHING HE SAYS, KILL HIM IF YOU MEET HIM ON THE ROAD

KILL HIM EVEN IF HE HAS FOUND A WAY OUT OF SUFFERING, BUT ONLY IF HE HAS SAID IT OUT LOUD

KILL HIM EVEN IF HE HAS TRIED TO HELP PEOPLE, BUT ONLY IF HE HAS DONE IT FOR FREE

DO NOT BELIEVE IN ANYTHING HE SAYS UNLESS HE HAS TRIED TO HELP EVERYONE FOR FREE

KILL HIM EVEN IF HE HAS TRIED TO HELP EVERYONE FOR FREE AND HAS FOUND A WAY OUT OF SUFFERING

KILL HIM EVEN IF HE HAS FOUND A WAY OUT OF SUFFERING AND HAS TRIED TO HELP EVERYONE FOR FREE

BECAUSE THAT IS NOT THE WAY IT IS

LIFE IS SUFFERING, AND THERE IS NO WAY OUT

PRECISELY

BY MANTRA DAS

I HAVE MOST OF THE MENTAL ILLNESSES

I AM OVERWHELMED BY THEM, LIKE A MOTHER DOG WITH TOO MANY PUPPIES

I TRY TO EAT EACH OF THEM, IN TERROR

I FIND SOLACE IN MEDITATION

I EAT THEM AND THEY ARE REBORN EACH MORNING

THEY ARE THE WORK OF MY HANDS

I AM A MONK IN MY MIND

I HAVE A CHAMBER WHERE I AM NAKED AND ALONE

THE ONLY LIGHT IS FROM A CANDLE IN THE CORNER

I STARE INTO THE FLAME AND SEE MYSELF

IN EVERY WAY I AM A PERFECT MAN

MY SKIN IS TANNED, MY HAIR IS WAVY, MY EYES ARE GREEN, MY MUSCLES ARE STRONG

I AM A GOD TO MYSELF

I HAVE NEVER WANTED ANYTHING ELSE BUT PEACE IN MY LIFE

THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

BY MANTRA DAS

BECAUSE I AM INSANE
ALL OF MY CREATIVE ENDEAVORS ARE OUTSIDER ART
MY MUSIC, MY POEMS, MY PAINTINGS
HONORABLE OUTSIDER ART
QUAINT FOLK ART THAT EVOKES SYMPATHY
NOT RIDICULE
I AM A CHILD
IN THIS MOMENT I AM A CHILD
THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM IS SMALL
I CANNOT SEE AROUND IT
I CANNOT SEE THE WORLD BEYOND IT
ALL I CAN SEE IS THE CORNER
WHERE MY MOTHER AND SISTER ARE
WE ARE PAINTING PICTURES TOGETHER
WITH WATERCOLORS IN GLASS BOWLS WE'VE SET OUT ON THE TABLE
IT IS COLD OUTSIDE AND WE ARE WARM INSIDE
WE ARE LIVING IN A PAINTING BY VERMEER
AND THE PAINTING IS NOT FINISHED

THE COG IN THE WHEEL

BY MANTRA DAS

I AM NOW QUITE AWARE THAT I AM A COG IN THE GREAT WHEEL

I GIVE AND GIVE AND GIVE AND GIVE

TAKING AND TAKING AND TAKING AND TAKING AND TAKING

DESPERATELY TRYING TO CIRCUMVENT GUILT AND SHAME

MAKING A BRIEF APPEARANCE AS A SHADOW

I AM NOW QUITE AWARE THAT I AM A COG IN THE GREAT WHEEL

I WILL BE REPLACED AS SOON AS I AM NO LONGER NEEDED

I KNOW I' M NOT NEEDED BUT ONE DAY I WOULD LIKE TO BE REPLACED WITH
SOMETHING BETTER

SOMETHING MORE DESERVING

SOMETHING MORE VITAL TO THE GREAT WHEEL

I AM NOW QUITE AWARE THAT I AM A COG IN THE GREAT WHEEL

WITH NO POWER TO STOP THE TURNING

AND THE CONSTANT GIVING AND TAKING

THE DESPERATE GIVING AND TAKING AND GIVING AND TAKING

DESPERATELY TRYING TO CIRCUMVENT GUILT AND SHAME, MY NOSE FOREVER PRESSED AGAINST THE GLASS

THE GREEN PHARMACY

BY MANTRA DAS

I GO TO THE PHARMACY TO PICK UP MY SOOTHING MOOD STABILIZER
AND THE ANTIPSYCHOTIC THAT ALLOWS ME TO FUNCTION AND SLEEP
THE PHARMACIST HATES ME
AT THE DISPENSARY I AM LOVED LIKE A GENTLE KING
SWEET NECTAR, MY PEOPLE
HERE A PAINKILLER, THERE A SLEEPING PILL

I ' M NOT REALLY CRAZY
BUT I AM ONE OF YOU
THE YOUNG WOMAN WITH THE CRAZY EYES AND HANDS WHO DOESN ' T KNOW WHAT DAY IT IS
I AM THE MAN WHO THINKS HE ' S AN APE
I AM THE ONE WHO SLEEPS WITH A SLIVER OF MIRROR UNDER MY PILLOW
THE ONE WHO GETS INTO SCREAMING FIGHTS WITH HIS WIFE, THEN TAKES HER IN HIS ARMS
THE PHARMACIST KNOWS ALL MY SECRETS AND FEARS
HE NODS, HANDS ME MY MEDS
I WAVE GOOD-BYE AS I LEAVE THE PHARMACY
I PRETEND THAT WE ARE FRIENDS.

ISAIAH

BY MANTRA DAS

I MET ISIAH IN INTENSIVE OUTPATIENT THERAPY
A GROUP OF TEN PATIENTS ON ZOOM
NOBODY ELSE UNDERSTANDS BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER
WE ALL MADE PLANS TO STAY IN TOUCH
ISIAH TEXTED ME ON MY BIRTHDAY AND NEVER AGAIN

I THOUGHT HE WAS MY BEST FRIEND BUT HE WAS JUST ANOTHER PERSON
HE'D TELL ME I WAS BEAUTIFUL WHEN I PUT MY MAKEUP ON
I TRIED TO KILL MYSELF AFTER OUR THIRD SESSION
THEY PUT ME ON A NO FLY LIST AND SAID I COULDN'T COME BACK

I LEFT MY HOUSE AT 1:00PM AND RETURNED AT 11:30PM
MY MOTHER WAS SO UPSET SHE TOOK AWAY MY PHONE AND COMPUTER
SHE TOLD ME TO SEE A THERAPIST AGAIN
I MADE A NEW GROUP OF FRIENDS THAT SUMMER; THEY WERE SO MUCH FUN!
I GOT A HAIRCUT IN THE FALL AND MY OLD FRIENDS DIDN'T RECOGNIZE ME
THEY SAID THEY LOVED MY NEW STYLE, THEY JUST DIDN'T LIKE ME ANYMORE
I WENT OUTSIDE AND WALKED AROUND THE BLOCK FOR TWO HOURS, CRYING.
I FELT SO SAD, I WANTED TO DISAPPEAR.

SANGHA

BY MANTRA DAS

I STUDY VEDANTA BECAUSE OF MY AUTISM

I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT, WHICH IS WHY IT FASCINATES ME SO

WE ARE ALL THE SAME SPIRIT, THE SAME

I FEEL THIS WAY BUT I DON'T UNDERSTAND INDIA

I CAN NEVER UNDERSTAND

I ALWAYS FEEL LIKE I'M ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

MY SANGHA IS A GROUP OF PEOPLE I JUST SIT WITH

LATELY, I'VE BEEN THINKING

I DON'T KNOW IF SANGHA MEANS SOMETHING MORE THAN THIS

I DO NOT HAVE THE VOCABULARY TO DESCRIBE WHAT I MEAN BY THIS

BUT I BELIEVE IN THE COLLECTIVE SPIRIT OF THIS GROUP OF PEOPLE

WHAT IS IT THAT WE ARE TRYING TO DO? WHAT AM I TRYING TO DO?

SANGHA IS NOT A PLACE BUT AN IDEA

IT'S A GATHERING OF LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE WHO WANT TO LEARN AND GROW TOGETHER.

IT'S A PLACE THAT YOU CAN GO AND BE YOURSELF, WHATEVER THAT MEANS

I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS

I CAN'T EXPLAIN IT

I'M NOT SURE WHAT IT MEANS

I'M NOT SURE WHAT IT MEANS

I'M NOT SURE WHAT IT MEANS

I'M NOT SURE WHAT IT MEANS

I'M NOT SURE WHAT IT MEANS

I'M NOT SURE WHAT IT MEANS

I'M NOT SURE WHAT IT MEANS

THE MANY VOICES

BY MANTRA DAS

I TURNED 40 THIS SUMMER
SILVER STREAKS IN MY BEARD THAT I LOVE
JUST AS ONE LOVES LEAVES WITH AN AUTUMN TINT
MY LEAVES ARE FALLING QUICKLY
I LOOK AT THE RAPIDLY GROWING PILE ON THE GROUND WITH PANIC
I AM NOT READY TO LET GO YET
I WANT MY LIFE TO KEEP EXPANDING
MORE BOOKS READ, MORE EXPERIENCES HAD, MORE LOVE GIVEN
I AM NOT READY WITHOUT THEM
YET HERE IS THE PILE OF LEAVES
PILED IN THE CORNER OF THE YARD
THE LEAVES HAVE LOST THEIR PURPOSE
THEY HAVE NO REASON TO BE THERE
SO I AM CLEARING AWAY THE PILE
I AM THROWING AWAY THE PILE
IT IS INEVITABLE, IT MUST BE DONE
JUST AS WE MUST LOSE LOVES AND FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS
AND IT HURTS—IT HURTS SO MUCH.
BUT IN THIS PAIN THERE IS CLARITY.
TO SEE THAT YOU CANNOT FIGHT YOUR INNER SELF
YOUR SOUL WILL ALWAYS BE THERE, GUIDING YOU BACK HOME.

108 POEMS

BY MANTRA DAS

I FEEL LIKE A FAKE MOST OF THE TIME
A FAKE MUSICIAN, A FAKE POET, A FAKE MAN
JUST LIKE PINOCCHIO, I MOVE WHEN MY STRINGS ARE PULLED BUT I WANT TO BE REAL
WHEN I AM REAL, I AM HATED BY ALL
I WILL FALL IN BATTLE WITH VALOR
BUT I WILL NOT BE REMEMBERED AS A HERO
I WILL BE REMEMBERED AS A CYBORG WITH REAL DREAMS
I WILL BE REMEMBERED AS A MAN WHO LOVED HIS WOMAN
I WILL BE REMEMBERED AS A MAN WHO LOVED HIS CHILDREN
I WILL BE REMEMBERED AS THE MOST SELFISH MAN IN THE WORLD
I WILL BE REMEMBERED AS THE MOST BORING MAN IN THE WORLD
I WILL BE REMEMBERED AS A MAN WHO WAS NEVER THERE FOR ANYONE BUT HIMSELF
I WILL BE REMEMBERED AS A MAN WHO TRIED TO TAKE ON THE WORLD AND LOST TO HIS OWN DEMONS
I WILL BE REMEMBERED AS A FAKE POET AND A FAKE MUSICIAN
A SLAVE TO ANYONE WHO STRINGS HIS HEART TO MAKE ME DANCE
A SLAVE TO ANYONE WHO CAN CONTROL MY MIND AND BODY TO DO THEIR BIDDING
I WILL FALL IN BATTLE WITH VALOR
BUT I WILL NOT BE REMEMBERED AS A HERO
I WILL BE REMEMBERED AS A CYBORG WITH REAL DREAMS
I WILL BE REMEMBERED AS A MAN WHO LOVED HIS WOMAN
I WILL BE REMEMBERED AS A MAN WHO LOVED HIS CHILDREN
I WILL BE REMEMBERED AS THE MOST SELFISH MAN IN THE WORLD
I WILL BE REMEMBERED AS THE MOST BORING MAN IN THE WORLD
I WILL BE REMEMBERED AS A MAN WHO WAS NEVER THERE FOR ANYONE BUT HIMSELF
I WILL BE REMEMBERED AS A MAN WHO TRIED TO TAKE ON THE WORLD AND LOST TO HIS OWN DEMONS
I WILL BE REMEMBERED AS A FAKE POET AND A FAKE MUSICIAN
A SLAVE TO ANYONE WHO STRINGS HIS HEART TO MAKE ME DANCE
A SLAVE TO ANYONE WHO CAN CONTROL MY MIND AND BODY TO DO THEIR BIDDING
I WILL FALL IN BATTLE WITH VALOR
BUT I WILL NOT BE REMEMBERED AS A HERO

THE MOUNTAIN

BY MANTRA DAS

FOR A YEAR AND A DAY, I WAS A DRUID
I EXALTED THE FRIGHTENING SHADOWS
FEELING AS THOUGH GOD IS A COLLECTION OF INDIFFERENT MONSTERS
DRUNK ON MALT LIQUOR WITH CANDLES BURNING
SUSPENDING MY DISBELIEF IN TERROR, SEARCHING FOR A WAY OUT
I WAS A PRIEST OF THE BLACK ARTS
AND I TRIED TO CATCH THE ATTENTION OF THE DEAD
SO THEY COULD SHOW ME THE WAY OUT
AN OLD WOMAN AT A CROSSROADS
TAUGHT ME HOW TO FIND MY WAY BACK TO MYSELF
I THOUGHT I WOULD STAY THERE FOREVER
BUT I 'M COMING BACK TO YOU NOW, BECAUSE I LOVE YOU.
TO THE MOUNTAIN, WHICH IS ALWAYS WATCHING OVER THE TOWN,
I SAY, "I 'M SORRY."

OUR LADY OF THE TURNING AIR

BY MANTRA DAS

I GAZED INTO THE EYES OF A MARBLE STATUE OF OUR LADY FOR OVER 30 MINUTES
CLEARING MY MIND WITH A MANTRA
I WAS DESPERATE TO BECOME CATHOLIC TO FIX MY MARRIAGE
THIS WAS THE BEST I COULD DO
I OFFERED UP MY ENTIRE BEING TO A STATUE
NOT KNOWING WHAT I WOULD RECEIVE
I COULDN'T LOOK AWAY
I WATCHED HER EYES MOVE
AND THEN I FELT MYSELF BEGIN TO TURN
IT WAS AN ACHE IN MY CHEST LIKE A GREAT LOSS
A FEELING OF BEING UNMOORED
THE ACHE MOVED UP INTO MY THROAT UNTIL I WAS CHOKING ON IT
AND THEN I WAS CRYING, SOBBING SILENTLY INTO MY HANDS
BREATHING HARD AND SHAKING UNTIL THE TEARS WENT AWAY
THE STATUE'S FACE HAD NOT CHANGED, BUT NOW IT CALLED TO ME IN A WAY I HAD NEVER KNOWN BEFORE
SO MANY NIGHTS I HAVE SLEPT ON THE FLOOR IN FRONT OF THE WINDOW, PRAYING FOR THE ANGELS TO COME TAKE ME AWAY.
BUT THIS WAS DIFFERENT. MORE SOLID, MORE SURE. A LOVE THAT WAS NOT A FANTASY BUT REAL.
I PUT MY HEAD DOWN ON MY KNEES AND CRIED FOR 30 MINUTES HARDER THAN I EVER HAD IN MY LIFE.
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I HAVE TOLD ANYONE ABOUT THIS.

A CONVERSATION ON UNDERSTANDING

BY MANTRA DAS

I AM A SEEKER
I HAVE MADE SO MUCH PROGRESS
NOSTALGIA THAT BRINGS ME TO TEARS
PERSPECTIVE TO MAKE ME REALIZE THAT THE GAME IS OVER
LIFE IS SO SHORT AND THERE IS SO LITTLE TIME LEFT
I AM A MAN WHO HAS COME TO TERMS WITH THE TRUTH
I HAVE READ THE TAO TÊ CHING
I HAVE HAD A SPIRITUAL AWAKENING
I HAVE FOUND MEANING IN LIFE BY STUDYING BUDDHISM AND TAOISM
I HAVE SEVERAL TATTOOS
AND A FEW PETS IN THE BACKYARD
I KNOW WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CONNECTED TO NATURE
I HAVE SEEN THE LIGHT AND I HAVE SEEN THE DARKNESS OF MY SOUL
I KNOW THAT I AM A MIRACLE OF CONSCIOUSNESS
I KNOW THAT TIME IS AN ILLUSION
I KNOW THAT I AM NOT MY THOUGHTS
BUT I ALSO KNOW THAT MY CAR IS NOT A HONDA CIVIC.
THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN MONEY
SUCH AS CONNECTING WITH OTHERS
AND KEEPING ONE'S DREAMS ALIVE
BUT I ALSO REALIZE THAT DREAMS ARE JUST ILLUSIONS WE CREATE FOR OURSELVES TO AVOID THE PAIN OF REALITY

.

THIS IS D* * *

BY MANTRA DAS

I ALWAYS GET A LITTLE EXCITED GOING INTO McDONALDS
I AM 40 BUT I STILL LOOK AT THE TOY DISPLAY FIRST
I NO LONGER RECOGNIZE THE CHARACTERS
I STILL WANT THE TOYS
SOMETIMES I STILL BUY ONE

THE TOYS ARE THE SAME,
BUT NOW THEY ARE IN A DIFFERENT BOX
I USED TO LOVE TO SIT AT THE TABLE WITH MY HAPPY MEAL
NOW I GET IT TO GO

I DON ' T EAT THE FOOD ANYMORE
I DON ' T KNOW WHY
SOMETHING ABOUT IT DOESN ' T TASTE RIGHT
I USED TO LOVE THEIR FOOD
BUT NOW IT MAKES ME WANT TO THROW UP
IF I EAT IT AT ALL

I THINK I ' VE OUTGROWN THIS PLACE NOW.
I USED TO FEEL LIKE A KID HERE
NOW I FEEL LIKE AN ADULT.
THEY MADE ME FEEL THAT WAY, I GUESS.
I USED TO GET THROUGH THESE DOORS WITHOUT PAYING FOR ANYTHING.
NOW I HAVE TO BUY SOMETHING EVERY TIME I WALK IN THE DOOR.
IT FEELS STRANGE.
BUT I HAVE MONEY.
EVERYTHING HERE IS EXPENSIVE ANYWAY.
THINGS COST MORE THAN THEY USED TO.
I DON ' T KNOW WHY.
THEY CHANGED THEIR PRICES WHEN I WASN ' T LOOKING, MAYBE.
WHEN I WASN ' T PAYING ATTENTION.
(OR MAYBE THINGS ALWAYS COST THIS MUCH AND I JUST NEVER HAD ANY MONEY.)

AND THEN I GOT LOST IN MY JOURNALING AGAIN

BY MANTRA DAS

MY THERAPIST SAYS THAT JOURNALING IS HELPFUL

I THINK IT IS BULLSHIT

I READ MY OWN THOUGHTS AND THEY SEEM TRITE AND PETTY

JOURNALING MAKES ME HATE MYSELF

IT MAKES ME REALIZE HOW PETTY AND UNGRATEFUL I AM

IT MAKES ME FEEL TERRIBLE

AND THEN I GET LOST IN MY JOURNALING AGAIN

I WONDER IF THIS IS HOW THE WORLD FEELS TO YOU

IT MUST BE TERRIBLE

TO BE SO TRAPPED INSIDE OF YOUR OWN MIND THAT YOU CANNOT ESCAPE

I WONDER IF YOU REALLY HAVE A CHOICE WHEN IT COMES TO JOURNALING OR NOT

IT IS LIKE TAKING MEDICINE OR GOING TO A DOCTOR OR GETTING A FLU SHOT

I WONDER IF THIS IS HOW THE WORLD FEELS TO YOU

I WONDER IF I WOULD FEEL BETTER ABOUT THE WORLD IF EVERYONE WAS FORCED TO JOURNAL TWENTY MINUTES A DAY

I WONDER IF THIS IS HOW THE WORLD FEELS TO YOU

I WONDER IF THE WORLD FEELS ANYTHING LIKE JOURNALING AT ALL

I WONDER WHAT YOU ARE THINKING RIGHT NOW WHILE YOU READ THIS POEM

QUESTIONING AND THE SELF

BY MANTRA DAS

I WAS DRIVING MYSELF TO THE MENTAL HOSPITAL FOR SHOW
SO PEOPLE WOULD TAKE ME SERIOUSLY AND TAKE CARE OF ME
I WAS GOING TO LIE AND TELL THEM THAT I WAS SUICIDAL
TO GET ATTENTION, THIS REALLY HAPPENED
MY WIFE TALKED ME OUT OF IT BUT I GOT ATTENTION
I GOT SO MUCH ATTENTION IT WAS SCARY
I DIDN'T WANT TO COMMIT SUICIDE, I JUST WANTED ATTENTION
I WAS GOING TO LIE AND TELL THEM THAT I WAS SUICIDAL
AND SAY THAT I HAD A PLAN, BUT I DIDN'T
AND WHEN THEY LOCKED ME UP I WAS GOING TO PRETEND TO BE CRAZY
AND TRY TO MAKE THEM THINK I WAS CRAZY, BUT I WASN'T
I JUST WANTED ATTENTION.
I WAS GOING TO LIE AND TELL THEM THAT I WAS SUICIDAL
BEFORE I WENT TO THE HOSPITAL, MY FRIEND TOLD ME THAT HE WOULD NEVER
HURT HIMSELF BECAUSE IT WOULD HURT HIS PARENTS TOO MUCH
AND HE'D NEVER DO ANYTHING THAT COULD HURT HIS PARENTS
AND THAT IS WHEN I KNEW HE WOULD NEVER KILL HIMSELF
BECAUSE OF THE PRESSURE OF HURTING HIS PARENTS.

WELBY

BY MANTRA DAS

EVERY DAY, I WOULD CRY WITHOUT A REASON
I SLEPT FOR 3 HOURS A NIGHT, FOR MONTHS
WAKING UP AS THOUGH I HAD JUST WALKED OUT OF AN EXPLODING BUILDING
IN SHOCK MOSTLY
I WAS ON DRUGS, BUT NOT THE RIGHT DRUGS
THEY WERE BAD FOR ME, BUT I DIDN'T KNOW HOW BAD
I WAS IN A KIND OF HELL
TRAPPED SOMEWHERE BETWEEN SLEEP AND THE WORLD
IT WAS LIKE WAKING UP IN A CONCENTRATION CAMP
I NEEDED TO SEE A DOCTOR, BUT NOTHING HELPED
I TRIED TO KILL MYSELF TWICE
AND FAILED, TWICE
ONE DAY I FOUND A POEM THAT CHANGED MY LIFE
A POEM BY W.S. MERWIN
ABOUT A POET WHO WENT BLIND WHEN HE WAS MIDDLE-AGED
I THOUGHT, I COULD BE THIS MAN, IN THIS MOMENT
THIS IS WHAT I'M FEELING NOW
IF I DON'T PULL OUT OF IT, I WILL BE THIS MAN, ONE DAY
I WILL HAVE LIVED WITH MYSELF FOR YEARS BEFORE IT HAPPENED
AND THAT'S WHEN IT HIT ME: THAT I WANTED TO LIVE
THAT THIS IS WHAT LIFE IS, ONE FUCKING THING AFTER ANOTHER
AND YOU CAN EITHER CRY ABOUT IT, OR TRY TO UNDERSTAND IT
AND I DECIDED TO UNDERSTAND
SO I FOUND A DOCTOR

THE SILENT MAN

BY MANTRA DAS

MY NEW MANTRA IS 'OH WELL'
THE WORLD RECEDES AWAY FROM ME
I LIVE ON A CLOUD, ON THE MOON
WHATEVER HAPPENS IS REASONABLY FLAT
DISPASSION IS THE ULTIMATE SPIRITUAL FEAT
THE ONLY WAY TO SURVIVE,
WITHOUT LOOKING UP OR DOWN
I FLOAT ON MY AIR MATTRESS
SURFACING EVERY NOW AND THEN TO BREATHE
AND TELL MYSELF THAT IT'S FINE,
WITHOUT A CARE OR A TRACE OF A CLUE
ABOUT THE WORLD BELOW
I JUST SEE THE CLOUDS THROUGH MY TELESCOPE
AND SMILE, AND SAY 'OH WELL!'

FROM AN INVITATION TO BUNKER MADNESS

BY MANTRA DAS

THERE IS NO CHOICE BUT TO ENDURE
TO LEARN RESILIENCY
UNDER THE THREAT OF DEATH FROM A PLAGUE
CHERISH THIS LIFE AND IT'S BREVITY
IN A WEEK I COULD BE DEAD FROM THE VIRUS
I WILL TRY TO WRITE A GOODBYE LETTER
BUT I AM NOT SURE HOW
I AM NOT SURE WHAT TO SAY
I WILL BE IN BUNKER MADNESS WITH ALL MY FRIENDS
WE WILL LOOK AT THE STARS AND TALK ABOUT HOW MUCH WE LOVE EACH OTHER
WE WILL STAY UP LATE TO TALK ABOUT HOW MUCH WE HATE EACH OTHER
WE WILL HIDE IN THE DARK WHERE NO ONE CAN SEE US
AND WE WILL KNOW EACH OTHER'S BODIES LIKE THE BACK OF OUR HANDS
WE WILL BE AFRAID BUT WE WILL BRAVELY FACE IT
BECAUSE WE ARE TEENAGERS AND WE THINK WE ARE INVINCIBLE
WE ARE LEAVING FAMILY BEHIND, BUT WE ARE MAKING NEW FAMILY HERE.
YOU CAN'T STOP US NOW. WE HAVE MADE UP OUR MINDS.

WATERS OF THE EARTH

BY MANTRA DAS

THE ELEMENT OF WATER IS WHAT I FEEL MOST STRONGLY
MOVEMENT AND TRANQUIL ENERGY
I AM BAPTIZED BY EVERY DROP OF IT
FEARFUL OF THE DEEP OCEAN
MEDITATING ON DRIFTWOOD
THE SOUND OF WATER RUSHING THROUGH THE PIPES
THE FEELING OF IT IN MY HANDS
THE SMELL OF A MOIST, WARM RAIN
THE SNOWFLAKES SPARKLING AS THEY FALL
THE WATER THAT NOURISHES THE ROOTS OF PLANTS
THE WATER THAT FILLS THE RIVER
THE WATER THAT FLOWS DOWNHILL
I AM GRATEFUL FOR THE WATERS OF EARTH

THE DAY IN QUESTION

BY MANTRA DAS

FOR ME DEPRESSION IS THE BACKGROUND HUM OF THE UNIVERSE

IT RINGS LIKE TINNITUS IN MY EARS

CONCERNING AND ANNOYING EVERYONE AS A DRAMA QUEEN

I AM DROWNING AND I WILL PULL YOU UNDERWATER

I AM TREADING WATER EACH DAY WITH HOPE

I AM TRYING TO FIND A WAY TO REACH THE SURFACE

OF MY OWN ACCORD

AND I AM KICKING YOU DOWN AS I DO

FOR ME DEPRESSION IS THE BACKGROUND HUM OF THE UNIVERSE

IT IS THE DARKNESS THAT IS ALWAYS THERE, WAITING IN THE SHADOWS

IT IS THE SEAT THAT I HAVE HELD IN THE BACK ROW OF MY LIFE

IT IS THE COMFORT AND FAMILIARITY OF FAILURE, FEAR, AND DOUBT

IT IS NOT ME; AND YET IT HAUNTS ME

IT IS NOT MY FRIEND; AND YET IT HAS TAKEN UP RESIDENCE IN MY HEAD

FOR ME DEPRESSION IS THE BACKGROUND HUM OF THE UNIVERSE

I WANT IT TO GO AWAY, BUT I KNOW I NEED IT TO STAY

I WILL LOOK FOR YOU IN EVERY HALLWAY AND CLASSROOM, AT EVERY GATHERING AND PARTY

I WILL FEEL YOUR EYES WATCHING FROM DARKENED CORNERS

I WILL HEAR YOUR WHISPERS IN QUIET ROOMS AND VACANT HALLWAYS

I WILL SMELL YOUR ODOR IN THE AIR AND IN MY HAIR

I WILL TASTE YOUR BITTERNESS ON MY TONGUE AND FEEL IT DEEP INSIDE MY SOUL

FOR ME DEPRESSION CAN BE FOUND IN EVERY CORNER OF MY HEART AND MIND.

THE ULTRAVIOLET GOD

BY MANTRA DAS

THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH FOR ME
I CLEAR MY MIND WITH MANTRAS
FOR MINUTES ON END I AM ONE WITH EVERYTHING
I AM ONE WITH SHIVA, THE ENERGY OF UN-MANIFEST POTENTIAL
FOR ONCE I HAVE THE UPPER HAND
THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH FOR ME
I CLEAR MY MIND WITH MANTRAS
A WAVE OF AURAS, RED AND VIOLET AND WHITE,
NEARLY KNOCKS ME OVER.
ONCE A MONTH, SHIVA IS A WOMAN
I AM ONE WITH KALI, THE DARK FEMININE POWER OF DESTRUCTION
I HAVE BEEN CHOSEN TO BE HER VESSEL.
I AM ONE WITH SHIVA, THE ENERGY OF UN-MANIFEST POTENTIAL
FOR ONCE I HAVE THE UPPER HAND
THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH FOR ME
I CLEAR MY MIND WITH MANTRAS
I AM THE ULTRAVIOLET GOD.

A HAIKU

BY MANTRA DAS

SHIMMERING WATER AT SUNRISE
CHILLY DECEMBER ON A PARK BENCH BY THE LAKE
THE REFLECTION IS THE SAME AS THE SKY
I CLING TO THE PRESENT BUT MY MIND IS WORRIED ABOUT EMAIL
I MOURN THE SUNRISES I HAVE MISSED AND THOSE I WILL MISS
I WILL MISS THE DOGS WHO WILL WALK THIS PATH TOMORROW AND EVERY DAY FOR YEARS
I SIT NEXT TO A WOMAN WITH A CANE WHO IS TALKING ON HER PHONE
SHE IS SPEAKING LOUDLY TO SOMEONE WHO IS QUIET AND FAR AWAY
I HEAR HER BREATHING AND THE SOUND OF HER FEET ON THE GRAVEL PATH
THE AIR IS SO COLD MY PHONE THINKS IT IS A GLOVED HAND
I PUT MY HAND IN MY POCKET AND TOUCH MY KEYS
I THINK OF HOW I WOULD WAKE UP IF I COULD SLEEP
I THINK OF HOW I WOULD LEAVE THIS BENCH IF I COULD WALK
I THINK OF HOW I WOULD SWIM IF I COULD FLOAT
THE WATER RISES UP OVER MY SHOES AND I FEEL A LITTLE SICK
WHEN THE SUN PEAKS OVER THE MOUNTAINS AND SHINES RED ON THE LAKE'S SURFACE
MY HEART BEATS AGAIN, I AM OUT OF BREATH, I AM HAPPY.

THIS IS HOW IT BEGAN

BY MANTRA DAS

DO NOT PROJECT A FAÇADE ONTO ME

I AM NOT YOU

I WISH I COULD BE BUT I AM NOT

I WILL NEVER BE YOU

I WISH I COULD BE YOU

I WISH I COULD BE YOU

I WISH I COULD BE YOU WITH ALL MY HEART

O I WISH I COULD BE YOU

O HOW I WISH IT WERE SO

HOW I WISH IT WOULD BE SO

HOW I WISH IT COULD BE SO

I WIGTO, .LSH I WERE YOU

I WISH I WERE YOU

I WISH YOU WERE ME

YOU ARE ME

I AM YOU

YOU ARE I

WE ARE ONE AND THE SAME

WE ARE ONE AND THE SAME

WE ARE ONE

THE 27 CLUB

BY MANTRA DAS

IT TAKES SIX YEARS TO REALIZE THAT YOU ARE NO LONGER 21
NOBODY CAN CLAIM YOUTH PAST 26
EVERYTHING SEEMS SO SERIOUS IN YOUR 20S
I AM SO GLAD THEY ARE OVER
I UNDERSTAND WHY SO MANY PEOPLE CANNOT FACE 28
I WONDER IF AMY WINEHOUSE WOULD HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT HAD SHE LIVED
YOU SEE, WE ARE ALL BORN WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF DEATH
THE QUESTION IS NOT HOW DO YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE, BUT HOW CAN YOU MAKE EVERY MOMENT COUNT
YOU CAN'T HELP BUT FOCUS ON THE PAST WHEN YOU'RE LOOKING AT THE FUTURE
AND THE FUTURE IS A SPOOKY PLACE
I DO NOT KNOW HOW TO LOOK AT LIFE NOW THAT I AM 30
I AM NOT IN THE SAME PLACE I WAS WHEN I WAS IN MY 20S
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHERE I WILL BE IN FIVE YEARS
WHEN I WAS YOUNGER I THOUGHT THAT I WOULD BE MARRIED BY NOW
I THOUGHT THAT I WOULD HAVE A FAMILY BY NOW
I THOUGHT THAT I WOULD BE FURTHER ALONG THAN THIS
BUT REALLY, THERE'S NO WAY TO PREPARE YOURSELF FOR ADULthood
IF YOU ARE STILL WAITING FOR THE RIGHT TIME TO MAKE A CHANGE, IT WILL NEVER COME
THE RIGHT TIME WILL NEVER COME
IF YOU ASK ME, PEOPLE SHOULD START LIVING THEIR LIVES MORE FULLY AT 22
I USED TO THINK THAT LIVING YOUR LIFE FOR YOURSELF WAS SELFISH AND IMMATURE
I USED TO THINK THAT YOU SHOULD LIVE YOUR LIFE FOR OTHERS
BUT NOW, I THINK THAT IT IS SELFISH AND IMMATURE TO LIVE YOUR LIFE FOR OTHERS
I CAN'T WAIT TO BE OLD AND BE IN MY 80S
I WANT TO THINK THAT I HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE
I WANT TO THINK THAT I HAVE DONE SOMETHING WITH MY LIFE
I THINK THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE
I WANT TO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT I LEFT THIS WORLD A BETTER PLACE
I WANT TO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT I LEFT THIS WORLD A LITTLE BETTER PLACE
I WANT TO BE ABLE TO SAY THAT I MADE A DIFFERENCE
BUT I AM NOT SURE IF I WILL BE ABLE TO
I CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL LIKE I AM NOT DOING ANYTHING

ON WRITING A POEM

BY MANTRA DAS

EVERYONE LOVES AN EMPLOYEE WHO ACTS WITHIN THEIR ROLE
PLEASING THE SUPERVISOR BY EAGERLY FINISHING THEIR WORK
ENGRAINED WITH WORK ETHIC, I RECOGNIZE MY DHARMA
MY ENTIRE FUTURE FLASHING BEFORE MY EYES EACH DAY
AS A LOUD ALARM BELL

LEANING IN WITH A SMILE, I TELL THEM I'LL TAKE CARE OF IT
I'LL MAKE SURE THAT THE ORDER IS FILLED BY TOMORROW
I PROMISE TO COMPLETE IT BEFORE MY SHIFT ENDS
JUST AS I DID FOR THE LAST FIVE REQUESTS
BUT WHEN I GET HOME, I CAN'T WRITE ANYTHING
THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME
I'VE HAD TROUBLE DOING THINGS I NEED TO DO
MY DESIRE TO BE A GOOD EMPLOYEE IS NOT RECIPROCATED BY MY BODY
IT'S LIKE WHEN YOU TRY TO REMEMBER SOMETHING YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN
YOU KNOW YOU HAVE IT, BUT IT WON'T COME TO MIND
THAT'S HOW MY BODY RESPONDS TO THE TASKS OF THE DAY
I WISH I COULD GO BACK TO THE TIME WHEN IT WAS POSSIBLE FOR ME TO GET OUT ONE POEM A DAY
NOW ALL I CAN DO IS SIT AT MY DESK, STARING AT THE COMPUTER SCREEN WITH MY MIND BLANK
WONDERING IF ANOTHER POEM WILL EVER COME AGAIN

THE KORAN

BY MANTRA DAS

I FEEL THE URGENCY OF MOHAMMAD
MEDITATING IN A CAVE AND FEVERISHLY TRANSCRIBING ALLAH'S WORD
I WONDER IF HE WAS STRUCK FORCEFULLY ON THE HEAD TOO
WAS HE RUNNING OUT OF TIME, OR DID HE KNOW THE FUTURE
I HAVE SO MUCH LOVE FOR MOHAMMAD
I LOVE HIM AS IF I WROTE THE KORAN
I'M ALWAYS BEING WATCHED AND MONITORED FOR ANY SIGNS OF SUSPICIOUS BEHAVIOR
I HAVE TO MAKE SURE I DON'T OVER-EMPHASIZE ANYTHING WHEN I'M TALKING TO MY MUSLIM FRIENDS
I HAVE TO ACT CALM AND MATTER-OF-FACTLY
I HAVE TO KEEP GOING FOR THEIR SAKE
I HAVE TO KEEP GOING FOR ALL THE MUSLIMS' SAKE

A MAP OF OPTIMISM

BY MANTRA DAS

SOMETIMES I THINK I AM AN ACROSS-THE-BOARD FAILURE
UNFIXABLE AND DESTINED FOR TRAGEDY
IT IS ONE EDGE OF THE BIPOLAR SPECTRUM
I KNOW IT IS INSANITY BUT IT FEELS REAL
OTHER TIMES I THINK I WILL BE REMEMBERED BY HISTORY
MOST OF THE TIME I FEEL IN BETWEEN
AND THAT IS OK

LIFE, NOT A SELF

BY MANTRA DAS

ONCE, DURING THE PANDEMIC I GOT TOO HIGH
I FELT THE ACTUAL EXPERIENCE OF BEING NO SELF
IT WAS TERRIFYING, LIKE WALKING OFF OF A CLIFF AND REALIZING YOU ARE FALLING
I WAS NEVER QUITE THE SAME AFTER THAT
I CLING TO THE HERMIT CRAB SHELL OF SELF
I AM VERY CAREFUL TO REMEMBER WHO I AM
FOR THE SAKE OF MY SANITY, BUT SOMETIMES I DO NOT
I FORGET WHO I WAS YESTERDAY
I AM CONVINCED THAT I WILL NEVER BE MYSELF AGAIN
BECAUSE THERE IS NO SELF TO BE
JUST A MASS OF SUFFERING AND CONFUSION, A BODY, A MIND
I WISH I COULD GO BACK TO THAT MOMENT OF NO SELF
IT FELT LIKE LIBERATION, FREEDOM FROM BEING IN THE BODY
IT WAS. WAS IT?
I TRY TO REMEMBER TO BE PRESENT IN THE BODY, BUT THEN THE BODY IS SO SICK
IT IS HARD TO TAKE THIS MOMENT AS THE ONLY ONE THERE IS
I REMEMBER THE PANIC AND TERROR OF FEELING NO SELF
AND IN DESPERATION HOLD ON TO THIS IDENTITY OR THAT ONE
BUT THEY ARE ILLUSIONS, THEY ARE MADE UP, THEY CANNOT HOLD ME
AND YET WHEN I AM WITH SOMEONE I LOVE, MY MIND LEAVES MY BODY
AND CLIMBS INTO THEIRS AND EXPRESSES ITSELF THROUGH THEM
AND I FORGET WHO I AM AND THEY FORGET WHO THEY ARE AND WE LOVE EACH OTHER
AND WHAT A BEAUTIFUL ILLUSION THAT IS.

THIS IS THE BEST POEM I HAVE EVER WRITTEN.

BY MANTRA DAS

I GREW UP BELIEVING THAT I WOULD SOMEDAY BE FAMOUS
LIVING A LIFE OF EASE AND GLAMOUR
I KNEW IT WAS A JOKE, BUT I WANTED TO TRY
I BECAME A COWBOY PUNK, A REVOLUTIONARY
IT FELL THROUGH, BUT NO MORE SO THAN ANYTHING ELSE
I WAS A COWBOY PUNK, A REVOLUTIONARY
IT WAS A JOKE AND I WAS ONLY KIDDING
THAT WAS THE POINT, I WAS ONLY KIDDING
I TRIED TO BE A COWBOY PUNK, A REVOLUTIONARY
BUT I COULDN'T MAKE IT WORK.

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANT TO BE A COWBOY PUNK, A REVOLUTIONARY
I ONLY KNEW THAT IT WAS SOMETHING I WANTED TO BE
DISAFFECTED YOUTH IN A SMALL TOWN IN THE LATE 80S
LONGING FOR THE WORLD AND IT'S INFINITE POSSIBILITIES
FEELING LIKE YOU'RE ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN
LIKE YOU DON'T BELONG, LIKE YOU JUST DON'T FIT IN
THEN YOU FIND OTHER PEOPLE LIKE YOU, MISFITS AND OUTCASTS
YOU FEEL YOU HAVE FOUND HOME, BUT THEN THEY DISAPPOINT YOU SOMEHOW
MAYBE THEY DRINK TOO MUCH OR DO DRUGS OR GET INTO FIGHTS WITH THE WRONG PEOPLE
YOU FEEL BETRAYED THEN, BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT WHAT YOU THOUGHT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO BE
THEY ARE NOT WHAT YOU THOUGHT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO BE
YOU THOUGHT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO BE LIKE YOU
BUT THEY WERE NOT LIKE YOU

THE SHADES OF THE FATHERS

BY MANTRA DAS

I JUST WANT TO HIDE FROM EVERYONE
AND PEEK OUT EVERY NOW AND THEN FOR FALLING BREADCRUMBS
FROM NOW ON, I VOW
THE SERVANT OF THE WILD WESTERN WIND
NEVER AGAIN
I WILL BE A WOLF 'S VESTMENT
I WILL WEAR THE CAPE, I WILL HIDE IN IT
I WILL SLEEP IN IT, I SHALL DREAM IN IT
I WILL WAKE UP FROM THE SNORING OF THE WILD DEER
AND I WILL HOWL.

THE CASTLE AT WITHYBUSH

BY MANTRA DAS

I WAS ONCE INVITED TO A WAREHOUSE RAVE, YEARS AGO

SOMEBODY OFFERED ME SOME ACID, YEARS AGO

DINOSAUR JR, YEARS AGO

THE 1990S

I NEVER DID ANY OF THOSE THINGS

I AM SO MUCH LESS COOL THAN I WOULD HAVE BEEN

I ' M NOTHING LIKE THE PERSON I WANTED TO BE

I ' M SO MUCH LESS COOL THAN I WANTED TO BE

I NEVER GOT A CHANCE TO HAVE THE EXPERIENCES I WANTED

I NEVER GOT A CHANCE TO HAVE MY YOUTH

I ' M NOT GOING TO BE YOUNG FOREVER

I ' M NOT GOING TO ALWAYS HAVE MY YOUTH

I ' M NOT GOING TO ALWAYS GET TO BE A YOUNG MAN

TIME IS FLEETING AND TIME IS CRUEL

TIME IS CRUEL AND TIME IS CRUEL AND TIME IS CRUEL

(BUT I DON ' T FEEL OLD)

TIME IS CRUEL, BUT TIME CAN ALSO BE KIND

TIME IS CRUEL BUT TIME CAN ALSO BE KIND

TIME IS CRUEL BUT TIME CAN ALSO BE KIND

(BUT I DON ' T FEEL OLD)

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WINNING THE GAME AND WINNING A GAME

BY MANTRA DAS

ONCE AT SOCCER, WHEN I WAS 7, I PISSED MY SHORT SOCCER SHORTS

I WAS SITTING DOWN DURING A PAUSE IN THE GAME

I THE PISS MOSTLY WENT ON THE GROUND

I WONDERED IF ANYONE SAW

MY INNER THIGHS BURNED WITH A RASH

I FELT WHEN I STOOD UP A GUSH

I WORRIED I HAD PEED THE SHORTS BEFORE

I FELT ASHAMED AND THEN RELIEVED

BUT I WORRIED ABOUT MY EMBARRASSMENT

AND THE POSSIBLE SMELL OF PISS

THE COACH SAID GO GET CLEANED UP

AND THEN REJOIN THE GAME

I WAS GLAD TO BE OFF THE FIELD

I WENT TO THE BATHROOM AND TOOK OFF MY SHORTS

MY THIGHS WERE RED AND BURNING WITH RASH

I WASHED MY THIGHS AND MY SHORT WHITE SOCCER SHORTS

IN THE SINK OF BLUE TILED BATHROOM WALL

I TURNED THEM INSIDE OUT, THEY WERE STILL WET

BUT I PUT THEM ON ANYWAY, THEY WERE COLD AND WET

I REJOINED THE GAME, THE OTHER KIDS DIDN'T NOTICE

AS FAR AS I COULD TELL, I DON'T THINK ANYONE DID.

A CHEER FOR THE ORGAN GRINDER AND HIS MONKEY

BY MANTRA DAS

WHEN MY DAUGHTER WAS REALLY LITTLE, I SAW A REAL-LIFE ORGAN GRINDER,
THE MONKEY WAS ON A CHAIN AND WEARING A COSTUME, LIKE IN WIZARD OF OZ
THEN THE ORGAN GRINDER WENT TO THE PORT-O-POTTY
THE MONKEY WAS ON THE CHAIN, WHILE THE GUY TOOK A PISS
I'M NOT SURE, BUT MAYBE HE WAS IN SOME SORT OF TROUBLE
I REMEMBER THINKING THAT THE MONKEY WAS NOT ALL THAT SMALL
I MEAN THIS GUY WAS A BIG, STRONG-LOOKING GUY
AND THE MONKEY WAS RELATIVELY LARGE-NOT A LITTLE THING
BUT I DON'T THINK THERE WAS ANY DOUBT IN MY MIND
THAT IF THE ORGAN GRINDER HAD TO GO TO THE BATHROOM, THE MONKEY WOULD HAVE TO GO, TOO.
YOU KNOW? I THINK HE WOULD HAVE DONE IT IN HIS OWN WAY.
I MEAN, YOU DON'T WANT TO MAKE AN ORGAN GRINDER AND HIS MONKEY MAD, RIGHT?
AND I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE THERE WERE ANY STRINGS ATTACHED TO MY DAUGHTER, BUT SHE HAD HER OWN KIND OF CHAIN
THE ONE THAT MEANT THAT SHE WAS STILL PRETTY MUCH MINE.

THE MONKEY OF THE GODS

BY MANTRA DAS

I READ THIS BOOK, TEMPLE OF THE MONKEY GOD
SOME EXPLORERS GOT AN UNKNOWN BRAIN PARASITE
WHILE EXPLORING AN INDIANA JONES-TYPE JUNGLE TEMPLE
THEY DETERMINED THAT THE INDIGINOUS PEOPLES FROM THAT CITADEL HAD LIKELY DIED OF THE BRAIN PARASITE, MONKEY
THE INDIGINOUS PEOPLES HAD APPARENTLY WORSHIPPED THE PARASITE AS THEIR GODHEAD
THE PARASITE'S DNA WAS FOUND IN THE DEAD GOD'S BODY
IT WAS SOME SORT OF DEGENERATIVE BRAIN DISORDER THAT MADE PEOPLE THINK THEY COULD FLY

I HAD THIS VISION OF HEAVEN

BY MANTRA DAS

I HAVE A CROSS AND A FRAMED PICTURE OF OUR LADY IN MY CELLAR YOGA ROOM
DURING MEDITATION, I SAW THIS KALEIDOSCOPIC VISION OF OUR LADY
SHE SOMETIMES LOOKED LIKE MY FRAMED PICTURE
SOMETIMES LIKE A RENAISSANCE FAIR-TYPE PAINTING
I DO THE ROSARY SOMETIME
I WAS IN THE HOSPITAL ONCE DURING A MANIC BREAK
THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I EVER SAW OUR LADY OR A PICTURE OF HER
I DO THINK OF HER, THOUGH, WHEN I'M GOING THROUGH DIFFICULT TIMES
I THINK OF HER AS BEING VERY KIND AND UNDERSTANDING
I IMAGINE PEOPLE LIKE ME JUST COMING TO HER, DROPPING OUR BURDENS AT HER FEET AND GOING HOME
MAYBE IT'S JUST MY OWN IDEA OF HEAVEN
MAYBE IT'S JUST A KIND OF MEDITATION
I REALLY DON'T KNOW WHAT IT MEANS
I DON'T EVEN KNOW IF IT MEANS ANYTHING
BUT I THINK ABOUT HEAVEN A LOT, AND I THINK ABOUT THE CROSS, THE ROSARY
AND THE THINGS THAT I AM AFRAID OF AND HOW THEY WILL TRY TO TAKE ME FROM MY LOVED ONES
AND I THINK ABOUT HOW THE ROSARY IS A WAY TO SAY THAT I'M NOT GOING TO LET THEM DO THAT
THE ROSARY IS A WAY FOR ME TO SAY THAT I'M GOING TO BE STRONG
AND I THINK ABOUT OUR LADY
I THINK ABOUT HER BEING A WAY FOR ME TO SAY THAT I'M GOING TO BE STRONG

A FEW THOUGHTS ON MEDITATION

BY MANTRA DAS

DURING MEDITATION, I TRIED TO LEAVE MY BODY
THERE WERE SWIRLING COLORS AND I GOT EXCITED THAT IT MIGHT BE THE AKASHIK RECORDS
THEN I TRIED TO LIFT THE ENERGY OUT OF MY THIRD EYE CHAKRA
I THINK I MIGHT HAVE FLOATED OUT JUST A LITTLE
BUT THEY PULLED ME BACK.

I'D LIKE TO SEE WHAT AURAS LOOK LIKE
AND IF THERE ARE COLORS BEYOND THE RAINBOW
I'D LIKE TO TALK TO THE DEAD AND SEE IF THEIR SOULS ARE DIFFERENT COLORS TOO
MAYBE I CAN TALK TO MY DAD AND HE CAN TELL ME WHO MY REAL DAD WAS
OR IF HE WAS EVEN REAL HIMSELF, OR IF HE WAS JUST A GHOST LIKE ME.

OUT TO THE WOODS

BY MANTRA DAS

DURING MEDITATION, I FELT A BUNCH OF WAVY COLORS.
LIKE AMBIENT SOUND, BUT COLORS INSTEAD.
KIND OF GREENISH-BLUIISH-REDISH-ORANGE, YA KNOW.
I COULD KIND OF MOVE THE COLORS WITH MY MIND
IT WAS LIKE THEY WERE A MIST
I COULD MAKE THEM THICKER OR THINNER.
IT WAS LIKE THE COLORS WERE A LIQUID, AND I COULD POUR THEM
I DIDN'T THINK ANYTHING OF IT.
THEN I REALIZED THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I'D MEDITATED
SINCE I'D BEEN OUT OF THE HOSPITAL LAST NOVEMBER.
AND THEN I REALIZED IT WAS THE FIRST TIME I'D BEEN ABLE TO SEE COLORS
SINCE I'D BEEN OUT OF THE HOSPITAL LAST NOVEMBER.
WHEN MY BRAIN WAS SWOLLEN UP LIKE A BALLOON.
AND WHEN I CAME TO, FROM THE COMA, THERE WASN'T MUCH COLOR AT ALL.
JUST SHADES OF GRAY, AND BLACK AND WHITE.
(GRAY AND WHITE ARE COLORS, RIGHT?)
BUT WHEN MY BRAIN SWELLING WENT DOWN SOME,
COLORS STARTED CREEPING BACK IN.
LIKE THEY WERE COMING BACK FROM A LONG WAY AWAY.
I DON'T THINK IT'S A COINCIDENCE THAT THEY CAME BACK DURING MEDITATION.
I THINK MEDITATION IS HOW YOU GET YOUR BRAIN TO START THINKING AGAIN.
YOU THINK WITH YOUR BRAIN.
THE REST OF YOU IS JUST KIND OF ALONG FOR THE RIDE.
IF YOUR BRAIN DOESN'T THINK, YOU DON'T THINK.
BUT THE BRAIN'S MADE TO THINK.
IT'S MADE TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO MAKE THE REST OF YOU WORK.
SO, DON'T MAKE IT WORK TOO HARD.
GIVE IT A BREAK EVERY NOW AND THEN.
GIVE IT A BREAK AND DO SOMETHING THAT IT'S NOT USED TO DOING.
GIVE IT A BREAK.

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

BY MANTRA DAS

AT THE NEW-AGE BOOKSTORE, I SAW A BOOK ABOUT ASTRAL PROJECTION
IT MADE ME FEEL LIKE I WAS CHOSEN BY THE UNIVERSE TO DO IT
EACH NIGHT BEFORE I WENT TO SLEEP, I TRIED TO LIFT MY SOUL OUT OF MY BODY
I ONLY MADE IT OUT ONE TIME
I GOT STUCK IN THE KITCHEN AND HAD TO COME BACK
I DIDN'T WANT TO BECAUSE I WAS FLYING
I HAD A HUGE, POWERFUL BODY AND FINS INSTEAD OF ARMS
I COULD BREATHE UNDERWATER AND MY EYES WERE LIKE FLASHLIGHTS
THERE WERE FISH ALL AROUND ME
IT WAS JUST LIKE IN THE MOVIE FINDING NEMO, EXCEPT THERE WAS NO MARLIN
IT WAS JUST ME, SURROUNDED BY COLORFUL FISH AND I FELT AT PEACE
BUT THEN I GOT STUCK IN THE KITCHEN AND IT WAS TOO LATE TO COME BACK
I WOKE UP THE NEXT MORNING AND COULDN'T REMEMBER ANY OF IT
I DON'T THINK IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN AGAIN
I WANT IT TO SO BADLY BUT I CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT HOW I ALMOST MADE IT OUT.

I, 6-LEGGED COW

BY MANTRA DAS

WHEN I WAS A CHILD, WE WENT THOUGH KANSAS
THERE WAS A BOOTH WITH A SIX-LEGGED COW
THEY HYPED IT UP BUT THE EXTRA LEGS WERE BASICALLY T-REX LEGS ON THE CHEST, WITH HOOVES
AND THE COW LOOKED MORE LIKE A BULL
BUT IT WAS STILL PRETTY COOL
BECAUSE I HAD NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THAT IN MY LIFE
AND I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT IT WAS AT THE TIME
BUT THEN I GREW UP AND I FOUND OUT WHAT IT WAS
WHICH WAS A SIX-LEGGED COW
AND NOW I KNOW THAT SIX-LEGGED COWS ARE REAL
BUT NOT THE WAY YOU SEE THEM IN OLD TIMEY PHOTOGRAPHS
THEY AREN'T REALLY COWS, THEY AREN'T MISSING ALL THEIR LEGS
THEY ARE JUST EXTRA-LIMBED COWS AND IF YOU LOOK AT THEIR EYES
YOU CAN SEE THAT THEY ARE JUST NORMAL COWS
AND THEY DON'T FEEL BAD OR HURT OR ANGRY OR SAD ABOUT IT
THEY JUST KEEP DOING THEIR THING OF GRAZING IN FIELDS AND PRODUCING MILK AND STUFF LIKE THAT
AND THEN WHEN THEY DIE THEY GET BURIED IN THE GROUND
AND THEY GET COVERED BY DIRT AND THEY JUST KEEP DOING THEIR THING OF BEING BURIED
AND WHEN I WAS A CHILD I THOUGHT THEY WERE REALLY COOL
AND I'LL NEVER FORGET THE FIRST TIME I SAW ONE
BECAUSE I HAD NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THAT IN MY LIFE
BUT THEN I GREW UP AND I FOUND OUT WHAT THEY WERE
WHICH WAS A SIX-LEGGED COW
AND NOW I KNOW THEY'RE NOT REALLY COWS
THEY'RE JUST EXTRA-LIMBED COWS
AND IF YOU LOOK AT THEIR EYES
YOU CAN SEE THAT THEY ARE JUST NORMAL COWS
AND THEY DON'T FEEL BAD OR HURT OR ANGRY OR SAD ABOUT IT
THEY JUST KEEP DOING THEIR THING OF GRAZING IN FIELDS AND PRODUCING MILK AND STUFF LIKE THAT
AND THEN WHEN THEY DIE THEY GET BURIED IN THE GROUND
AND THEY GET COVERED BY DIRT AND THEY JUST KEEP DOING THEIR THING OF BEING BURIED
AND WHEN I WAS A CHILD I THOUGHT THEY WERE REALLY COOL

THE CROW OF GHOSTS

BY MANTRA DAS

THE FIRST DAY OF QUARANTINE.

WE HAD TO PREPARE FOR ANYTHING.

I BOUGHT A BUNCH OF ROPE, AND WOOD TO BOARD UP THE DOORS.

CLEANING SUPPLIES, BUNGEE CORDS, DUCT TAPE, NAILS, A HOUSEHOLD FIRST-AID KIT, NOVENA CANDLES,
AND A HANDGUN WITH ABOUT 50 BULLETS.

I TAPED UP THE WINDOWS, AND SET UP A BARRICADE.

I FELT SAFE, BUT I WAS SCARED.

WE ALL WERE.

A STORY

BY MANTRA DAS

WHEN I GOT COVID, I PLAYED IT LIKE A DRAMA QUEEN

I MADE A BLOG ABOUT IT ONLINE AND LOST FRIENDS OVER MASK POLITICS

I THOUGHT I MIGHT DIE BUT IT WASN'T THAT SCARY

I WAS SO WIPED OUT FOR LIKE 3 MONTHS AND MY BREATHING IS STILL SOMETIMES SHALLOW, WHATEV

I'M NOT SAYING THAT I'M BETTER NOW

I'M JUST SAYING THAT I'M STILL HERE

THE OWL

BY MANTRA DAS

WHEN I WAS HIGH AT THE BONFIRE, I FINALLY GOT TO SEE AN OWL.
IT SWOOPED LIKE SLOW MOTION, MAKING NO SOUND
I THOUGHT IT WAS AN OMEN OF DEATH, BUT I HEARD THAT OWLS ARE COMMON
I CONSIDER IT AUSPICIOUS TO SEE AN OWL
IT WAS A SIGN OF DEATH AND REBIRTH, A SYMBOL OF THE NIGHT SKY
I THOUGHT IT WAS A SIGN TO RENOUNCE MY PAST AND MOVE ON
I THOUGHT IT WAS A SIGN TO RETURN HOME AND RECLAIM MY SOUL
I THOUGHT IT WAS A SIGN TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL AND FINISH MY DEGREE
I HEARD THAT OWLS CAN ONLY SEE IN BLACK & WHITE
BUT THEN I SAW A BLACK-AND-WHITE OWL, WHICH IS REALLY RARE
IT SWOOPED LIKE SLOW MOTION, MAKING NO SOUND
I HEARD THAT OWLS ARE COMMON & I SAW AN OWL.

THE OCEAN

BY MANTRA DAS

ONCE I DID A FULL SERIES OF SUN SALUTATIONS, THEN DID MEDITATION OUTSIDE THE BEACH PATIO WINDOW.

I SAT BY THE OCEAN AT NIGHT, MEDITATING, AT ONE WITH THE WAVES.

IT WAS THE DEEPEST I EVER MEDITATED, AND THE TV INSIDE TURNED OFF ON ITS OWN

AS IF IT WAS A SIGNAL TO ME.

I SAW THE LIGHTHOUSE, THE ROCKS AND THE OCEAN FROM MY MEDITATION SPOT. I WAS THERE

IN THAT SPOT WHEN THE SUN SALUTED ME AND THE OCEAN WAS FILLED WITH LIGHT.

I'VE BEEN TO THE OCEAN BEFORE AND AFTER BUT THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME I SAW THE OCEAN

AND FELT ITS POWER, LIKE A GOD'S PRESENCE.

THE OCEAN IS A MOVING WATERFALL. SOMETIMES IT IS CALM, SOMETIMES IT IS ROUGH.

WHEN YOU ARE IN THE OCEAN YOU CAN SEE ITS WAVES FROM WHICHEVER ANGLE YOU LOOK FROM.

IT IS JUST ANOTHER WORLD. AND WHEN YOU ARE IN IT, IT FEELS LIKE IT GOES ON FOREVER.

YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU ARE BECAUSE YOU CAN'T SEE LAND. THE WATER IS BLUE,

AND THE SAND IS WHITE, AND THERE ARE FISH SWIMMING AROUND YOU AND BIRDS ABOVE YOU.

THE OCEAN IS A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN THINK ABOUT YOUR LIFE AND YOUR FUTURE,

AND YOU CAN BE AT PEACE WITH YOURSELF.

THE OCEAN IS A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN BE ONE WITH YOURSELF.

FOUR DEVILS AND ONE MIRACLE

BY MANTRA DAS

OUT WEST, THERE ARE SMALL TORNADOS CALLED DUST DEVILS
YOU CAN SEE THEM OFF IN THE DISTANCE, STIRRING AROUND, NOT REALLY DANGEROUS
TUMBLEWEEDS ARE THERE TOO, JUST LIKE IN THE COWBOY SHOWS
SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST IS OUR DESTINATION
COWBOY BOOTS
TRAILER PARKS AND STRIP MALLS
IN THE EVENING, WE TAKE A WALK ALONG THE CREEK
THE CREEK IS OUR FAVORITE PLACE BECAUSE IT'S PEACEFUL THERE
AND WE CAN HEAR THE FROGS CALLING OUT TO EACH OTHER
SOMETIMES WE CATCH THE FROGS AND PUT THEM IN OUR POCKETS
SOMETIMES THE FROGS JUMP OUT OF OUR POCKETS AND FALL INTO THE WATER
THERE'S A FAMILY OF DEER THERE, TOO, GRAZING IN THE GRASS BY THE CREEK
SOMETIMES WHEN I LOOK AT THE DEER, I FEEL LIKE I COULD LOVE THEM

A MEDITATION ON THE ROAD

BY MANTRA DAS

AT MY FIRST SHAMANIC TRANCE, WE WENT TO THE UNDERWORLD
THE SHAMAN INSTRUCTED US ON THE POSTURE
THE SMUDGING CEREMONY WITH SWEETGRASS AND SAGE
I TRAVELLED DOWN DOWN DOWN AND THEN SAW AN OWL
I WAS TOLD IT WAS ATHENA'S OWL
I STAYED WITH THE OWL
I SAW A TREE OF KNOWLEDGE
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE UNDERWORLD
WHERE ALL THE SPIRITS WHO HAD PASSED BEFORE SAT ON BRANCHES
I WANTED TO SPEAK TO ONE OF THEM BUT COULDN'T
THEN I WAS TOLD TO COME BACK, THAT IT WAS TIME TO LEAVE THE UNDERWORLD
AND THEN I WAS LED THROUGH A TUNNEL TO A CAVERN
FULL OF JEWELS AND GEMS WHICH WERE LIGHTED BY AN ENTIRE GROVE OF CRYSTALS HANGING FROM THE CEILING.
I WAS TOLD TO PICK OUT ONE STONE AND THAT THAT STONE WOULD HELP ME ON MY PATH IN THIS LIFETIME.
I PICKED THREE, ONE FOR MY HEART, ONE FOR MY THROAT, ONE FOR MY THIRD EYE.
AT MY FIRST SHAMANIC TRANCE, WE WENT TO THE UNDERWORLD
THE SHAMAN INSTRUCTED US ON THE POSTURE
THE SMUDGING CEREMONY WITH SWEETGRASS AND SAGE
I TRAVELLED DOWN DOWN DOWN AND THEN SAW AN OWL
I WAS TOLD IT WAS ATHENA'S OWL
I STAYED WITH THE OWL
I SAW A TREE OF KNOWLEDGE
IN THE MIDDLE OF THE UNDERWORLD
WHERE ALL THE SPIRITS WHO HAD PASSED BEFORE SAT ON BRANCHES
I WANTED TO SPEAK TO ONE OF THEM BUT COULDN'T
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I WAS TOLD TO PICK OUT ONE STONE AND THAT THAT STONE WOULD HELP ME ON MY PATH IN THIS LIFETIME.
I PICKED THREE, ONE FOR MY HEART, ONE FOR MY THROAT, ONE FOR MY THIRD EYE.

THE WISDOM OF HORUS

BY MANTRA DAS

I ONLY HAD ONE EXPERIENCE WITH THE EGYPTIAN DEITY, HORUS
AFTER BEING GUIDED BY OUR SHAMAN INTO TRANCE
I WAS A HAWK, UP IN THE EGYPTIAN DESERT SKY
I FELT THE CONNECTION, BUT IT WAS SUBTLE
WHenever I SEE A HAWK, I REMEMBER THAT TIME
IT'S NOT A DREAM, BUT THE WISDOM OF HORUS
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN DRAWN TO PREDATORS
THEY HAVE AN UNFLINCHING CONFIDENCE IN THEIR OWN POWER
THEY DO NOT APOLOGIZE FOR BEING ALIVE
I WAS THAT HAWK
AND NOW I'M THIS WOMAN
THINKING OF THE HAWK, REMEMBERING THAT TIME
REMINDING MYSELF OF THE WISDOM OF HORUS

A NOTE ON NEW NAMES AND NEW FACES

BY MANTRA DAS

TODAY, I AM TAKING MY NEW NAME
WALKING OUT OF OLD SELF AS THOUGH IT WERE THE SCAFFOLDING OF A HOUSE
I WILL ALWAYS HOLD MY BIRTH NAME SACRED
IT WILL ALWAYS BE A PART OF ME
BUT NOW I MUST MOVE ON
SO I AM TAKING MY NEW NAME
IT IS BEAUTIFUL AND STRONG
I WILL WALK INTO IT AND BE CHANGED
MY NEW NAME WILL MAKE ME MORE POWERFUL
MY NEW NAME IS MY SISTER'S NAME
SO HER STRENGTH WILL BECOME MINE
SO I CAN BECOME HER POWER
MY FAMILY WATCHED ME COME HOME TODAY
THEY WERE HAPPY FOR ME TO HAVE A NEW NAME
I WILL SIT WITH THEM AND TALK ABOUT OLD TIMES
WE WILL SIT AROUND THE TABLE
AND REMEMBER HOW IT WAS IN THE OLD HOUSE
WE WILL TALK ABOUT HOW IT USED TO BE IN THE OLD COUNTRY
I WILL TELL THEM ABOUT THE NEW THINGS I HAVE SEEN AND DONE
THEY WILL TELL ME ABOUT THEIR DAYS
AND I WON'T BE ABLE TO TELL THEM ABOUT MY STRUGGLES AND FEARS
I WILL TELL THEM ABOUT MY FRIENDS AND MY WORK AND MY HOME
AND THEY WILL ASK ME IF I HAVE A HUSBAND YET
AND I WON'T TELL THEM THAT I DO NOT
THEY DON'T KNOW THAT I HAVE A BOYFRIEND FROM THE OLD COUNTRY WITH NO PAPERS HERE
THEY DON'T KNOW THAT HE IS SO GENTLE AND KIND
THEY WILL NEVER KNOW THAT I HAVE A SECRET
I WILL NEVER TELL THEM
I WILL TAKE MY NEW NAME
AND I WILL BE A NEW PERSON
AND I WILL LOVE MY NEW NAME
AND I WILL LOVE MY NEW LIFE

OUR LADY

BY MANTRA DAS

ONE TIME I WAS HAVING REALLY BAD TROUBLE WITH DEPRESSION
SO I LEFT WORK AND DROVE TO OUR LADY OF CONSOLATION, A CATHOLIC SHRINE
I WENT DOWN TO A CAVERNOUS CHURCH BASEMENT FULL OF STATUES THAT GRANT MIRACLES
A PILE OF CRUTCHES FROM THE HEALED
A GROUP OF DEFORMED BABIES
I WAS STANDING THERE
AND THIS OLD ITALIAN LADY CAME UP TO ME AND SAID, "WHY ARE YOU HERE?"
AND I SAID, "I WANT TO BE A BETTER PERSON."
AND SHE SAID, "WELL YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT OUR LADY'S NOT INTERESTED IN THAT."
"SHE ONLY LOVES US AS WE ARE."

CHANGES IN THE DESERT

BY MANTRA DAS

WHEN WE WERE IN COLLEGE, OUR FRIEND BROT ATE AN ENTIRE MESCALINE CACTUS
HE ORDERED IT ONLINE, SOMEHOW AND IT WAS SAID TO HAVE PSYCHEDELIC PROPERTIES
I REMEMBER HEARING OF HIM THROWING UP CHUNKS OF CACTUS
SO GLAD THAT I DIDN'T EAT ANY OF IT
HE HAD A BAD REACTION TO IT, AND BROKE OUT IN HIVES
THE CACTUS WAS GOING TO BE OUR DINNER THAT NIGHT
BUT BROT WAS SO ILL WE DIDN'T EAT IT
I THINK I ATE SOME MUSHROOMS LATER ON BUT I DON'T REMEMBER TOO MUCH ABOUT IT
I ENJOYED BEING STONED, BUT NEVER GOT HIGH ON POT, LSD OR MESCALINE
BROT TOLD US ABOUT THE CACTUS AND WARNED US NOT TO EAT ANY OF IT
HE HAD A BAD REACTION TO IT, AND BROKE OUT IN HIVES
I REMEMBER HEARING OF HIM THROWING UP CHUNKS OF CACTUS
SO GLAD THAT I DIDN'T EAT ANY OF IT
HE WAS ALLERGIC TO IT AND THE HIVES WERE SERIOUS
HIVES ON HIS LEGS, ARMS AND TORSO
COVERED IN HIVES HE LOOKED LIKE A GIANT BEE STING
IN THE TIME WE WERE FRIENDS AT COLLEGE, WE NEVER TOUCHED DRUGS
I BELIEVE HE WAS THE ONLY ONE OF US WHO DID
WE DIDN'T HAVE A LOT OF MONEY BACK THEN AND WHAT MONEY WE HAD WENT TOWARDS BEER AND FOOD
WE WERE ALL WORKING FOR OUR TUITION SO NO ONE HAD MUCH SPENDING MONEY
I'M SURE THE CACTUS WAS THE ONLY THING HE EVER BOUGHT WITH THAT MONEY
I CAN'T REMEMBER HOW MUCH IT COST
BUT I DO REMEMBER THAT HE WAS ALLERGIC TO IT
HE HAD A BAD REACTION TO IT, AND BROKE OUT IN HIVES
SO GLAD THAT I DIDN'T EAT ANY OF IT
I THINK I ATE SOME MUSHROOMS LATER ON BUT I DON'T REMEMBER TOO MUCH ABOUT IT
I ENJOYED BEING STONED, BUT NEVER GOT HIGH ON POT, LSD OR MESCALINE
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THE COUNTRY OF A THOUSAND BEGGARS

BY MANTRA DAS

THERE WERE A COUPLE OF TIMES IN MEDITATION WHERE I ENDED UP IN A TRANCE
IN WHICH I COULD SEE PEOPLE IN THE ROOM WHO WERE VERY VERY SUBTLE.
I STILL THINK THEY WERE GHOSTS.
BUT THEY WERE BEAUTIFUL AND HAPPY, AND THEY WERE WELCOMING.
THEY WERE NOT SUFFERING.
I HAD A SIMILAR EXPERIENCE WALKING HOME FROM WORK ONE NIGHT.
I WAS WALKING DOWN THE STREET TOWARD MY APARTMENT BUILDING AND I SAW A LITTLE GIRL
ABOUT EIGHT OR NINE YEARS OLD STANDING IN FRONT OF ME. SHE WAS WEARING RAGS.
SHE LOOKED AT ME AND SHE SMILED, AND SHE LOOKED SO HAPPY TO SEE ME.
FOR A MOMENT, I THOUGHT I KNEW HER. I DON'T KNOW HOW IT HAPPENED, BUT FOR A MOMENT,
I THOUGHT THAT MAYBE SHE WAS A CHILD THAT I HAD MET IN A PAST LIFE.
BUT THEN SHE SAID "OH, YOU HAVE TO GO NOW" AND VERY QUICKLY, SHE WAS GONE.
I WAS REALLY SAD WHEN SHE DISAPPEARED. I FELT REALLY SAD FOR HER.
I REALIZED THAT HAPPINESS IS NOT SOMETHING WE HAVE TO WAIT FOR OR EARN;
IT'S SOMETHING WE CAN EXPERIENCE RIGHT NOW, IN THIS MOMENT.
THAT'S WHY I'M DOING THIS PROGRAM: TO FIND MY HAPPINESS AND SHARE IT WITH OTHERS WHO ARE SUFFERING.

THE CAT IN THE MOON

BY MANTRA DAS

BECAUSE I HAVE AUTISM, I LOVE FULL MOON
IT'S SO FASCINATING TO ME BUT I HAVE NO IDEA WHY
I LOVE TO STARE AT IT AND TRY TO BE PRESENT FOR A FEW MINUTES
THE FULL MOON COMES AND GOES SO QUICKLY
I ALWAYS ENJOY NEW MOON
BUT FULL MOON IS THE BEST TO WATCH
I'D LIKE TO SEE A MOON WITH A CAT OR EVEN A DOG OR A SNAKE ON IT
I THINK THAT WOULD BE AMAZING TO SEE, ACTUALLY
I HAVE A LOT OF IDEAS FOR PAINTINGS ABOUT THE MOON
I STILL HAVE TO WORK OUT SOME OF THE DETAILS FOR EACH PAINTING
BUT SOMEDAY I'LL START WORKING ON THEM
BUT THEN AGAIN, I DON'T KNOW IF I WILL START WORKING ON THEM
BECAUSE I LOVE TO WATCH IT SO MUCH, I JUST WANT TO STARE AT IT FOREVER
BUT WE ALL KNOW THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE BECAUSE IT DOESN'T EXIST FOREVER
SO I CAN'T STARE AT IT FOREVER, BUT I WILL STILL ENJOY IT WHILE I CAN.

THIS IS MY OAKLAND, THAT IS MY L.A.

BY MANTRA DAS

WHEN I WAS VISITING MY BOHEMIAN FRIEND IN SAN FRANCISCO
HE HAD TO WORK SO I WENT TO OAKLAND BY MYSELF
MY PHONE DIDN'T WORK BECAUSE IT WAS JUST A FLIP-PHONE
I GOT SO FUCKING LOST IN THAT DANGEROUS NEIGHBORHOOD
STILL A LITTLE HIGH ON THE BART RIDE BACK
I DREW THIS IN MY NOTEBOOK
I WAS LOST MANY OTHER TIMES TOO
HERE'S ONE, I WAS GOING TO A SHOW AT THE NEW PARISH IN OAKLAND
IT WAS A HIPHOP/ELECTRONIC SHOW
I MET THIS GIRL WHO WAS FROM THE EAST BAY AND SAW THIS AMAZING BAND
I KNEW SHE WAS INTERESTED IN ME SO I TOOK HER HOME WITH ME
THE NEXT MORNING SHE TOLD ME SHE HAD TO GO AND THEN SHE JUST LEFT
I DIDN'T HAVE A CAR SO I HAD TO WALK TO BART AND THEN BACK TO WEST OAKLAND
AND THEN I HAD TO GET ON THE BUS IN THE POURING RAIN TO GO DOWNTOWN TO TAKE THE FERRY BOAT TO SAUSALITO
AND THEN I GOT ON THE WRONG BUS AND ENDED UP IN BERKELEY
AND THEN TRIED TO GET BACK TO OAKLAND BUT GOT LOST AGAIN AND HAD TO HITCHHIKE BACK TO SF
ALL OF THOSE PLACES THAT LOOK SIMILAR BUT ARE ACTUALLY VERY DIFFERENT.

BOY, I MISS YOU SOMETIMES

BY MANTRA DAS

WHEN I WAS AT COMFEST WAITING ON A MEDITATION SESSION
I MET THIS GUY NAMED CHARLIE BROWN
WE WERE BOTH WEARING COWBOY HATS AND I ASKED HIM WHAT TIME IT WAS
WE HUNG OUT FOR THE REST OF THE MORNING WATCHING BANDS
HE GAVE ME AN ENERGY HEALING
I TOLD HIM I WAS A POET AND HE SAID HE'D LIKE TO READ SOME OF MY STUFF
WE STARTED TALKING ABOUT HOW POETRY COULD HELP PEOPLE
AND THEN WE HUGGED
I BOUGHT HIM A BEER AND HE GAVE ME A BIG HUG
AND WE WERE REALLY CLOSE.

YOGA FOR ATHEISTS

BY MANTRA DAS

IF I DON'T DO MY YOGA ROUTINE EVERY DAY
I GET PISSED OFF AND DEPRESSED
I FEEL LIKE I WILL JUMP OUT OF MY SKIN
LIKE I'M MISSING SCHOOL OR WORK
MY OCD IS CRAZY LIKE THAT
IS IT TOO MUCH TO ASK FOR A LITTLE SPACE
ENOUGH TIME TO NESTLE IN
AND DO MY MORNING STRETCHES AND BREATHING
SO I CAN EASE INTO THE DAY
THANKS FOR NOT BEING A SWEAT HOG
YOGA FOR ATHEISTS IS NOT A RELIGION
IT'S A WAY OF STRETCHING THE MIND
IT'S NOT ABOUT BEING PERFECT
JUST TRY YOUR BEST TO BE KIND
IT'S NOT ABOUT BEING PERFECT
JUST TRY YOUR BEST TO BE KIND
IT'S NOT ABOUT BEING PERFECT
JUST TRY YOUR BEST TO BE KIND.

COMPOSER

BY MANTRA DAS

I ONCE STUDIED WITH A WELL-KNOWN COMPOSER
HE WAS INTO MUSIC AS CONCEPT ART
I HAD SOME KIND OF BREAKDOWN WHEN I WAS SUPPOSED TO PERFORM
THEN I BAILED ON A TRIP TO SAN FRANCISCO BECAUSE I WAS GETTING MARRIED
I NEVER REACHED OUT OR HEARD FROM HIM AGAIN
ONE DAY I WAS WALKING DOWN THE STREET
CAME UPON A GUY, SLIGHTLY HUNCHED OVER ON THE SIDEWALK
I GAVE HIM SOME CHANGE
HE SAID HE WAS A COMPOSER
I SAID I WAS TOO
HE SAID HE'D STUDIED WITH SOMEONE NAMED HARRY PARTCH
I HAD TOO
HE SAID HE WAS A COMPOSER WHO DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO STOP COMPOSING
I SAID I WAS A WRITER WHO DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO STOP WRITING
WE BOTH KEPT WALKING, HE IN ONE DIRECTION, ME IN ANOTHER
I HARDLY EVER THINK OF HIM ANYMORE
BUT SOMETIMES I FIND MYSELF COMPOSING

AFTER THE FEAST

BY MANTRA DAS

I ARRIVED AT THE MASONIC TEMPLE IN DETROIT
AS ANTICIPATED, THE ARCHETYPICAL HIPPIE WAS WAITING FOR ME
HIS NAME WAS WIZARD AND HE WAS ON SOME KIND OF LOW BUDGET RADIO SHOW
WE SMOKED A JOINT TOGETHER IN FRONT OF AN UPSCALE CROWD OF PEOPLE IN LINE
TO ENTER THE TEMPLE
THEY WERE MOSTLY BLACK PEOPLE AND A FEW WHITE PEOPLE
ALL DRESSED UP IN THEIR FINEST CLOTHING
I WORE A BLACK SUIT AND NO TIE
WE TALKED ABOUT THE MASONIC RITUAL
HE WAS GOING TO GIVE ME SOME KIND OF EXPLANATION ABOUT IT
IN EXCHANGE FOR MY SILENCE
I WAS INTERESTED IN THE WAY HE WAS DESCRIBING IT
AS I HAD WITNESSED THE RITUAL BEFORE IN A DIFFERENT CITY
THE ONE WHERE I WAS BORN
I THOUGHT ABOUT MY FATHER WHO WAS ALSO A MASON
AND MY MOTHER WHO NEVER REALLY UNDERSTOOD ME OR MY DESIRE TO BECOME A MASON
MY FATHER TOLD ME THAT I SHOULD LEARN ABOUT MASONRY AND ITS RITUALS
SO I DID, BUT WITH SOME RELUCTANCE
I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHY THE MASONS WANTED ME TO COME AROUND AND BE PART OF THEIR GROUP
IT SEEMED LIKE THEY ALREADY KNEW EVERYTHING ABOUT ME AND WHAT I WANTED TO DO WITH MY LIFE
BUT THEY SAID THEY NEEDED ME TO BE A BETTER MAN THAN THEY WERE, WHICH MEANT
THEY WEREN'T VERY GOOD MEN AT ALL
I WASN'T SURE IF THEY HAD HEARD OF MY FATHER OR MOTHER OR ANY OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN
MASONS AS WELL
I WAS STILL CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN INSIDE THE TEMPLE
I WANTED TO KNOW WHAT IT FELT LIKE TO BE A PART OF THE MASONS
BUT I ALSO WANTED TO KNOW WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE ON THE OUTSIDE
I WANTED TO KNOW HOW IT FELT TO BE THEM
I WANTED TO KNOW IF THEY WERE HAPPY
IF THEY WERE CONTENT
IF THEIR LIVES WERE FULFILLED
I WANTED TO KNOW HOW IT FELT TO BE THEM

I HAD A LITTLE MOUSE

BY MANTRA DAS

WHEN I WAS ABOUT 7 YEARS OLD I HAD A PET MOUSE
MY BUDDY BEN AND I WERE PLAYING WITH IT
I LEANED BACK BECAUSE MY BACK HURT, BUT THEN MY HAND CRUSHED THE MOUSE
THE MOUSE GOT A NOSEBLEED AND DIED AND I STARTED CRYING
I WAS CRYING TO GET A NEW MOUSE
I WAS CRYING BECAUSE I WAS SCARED OF DYING
I WAS CRYING BECAUSE I WAS NOT IN CONTROL OF WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MOUSE

I HAD A LITTLE MOUSE AND I LOVED IT
BUT THIS IS NOT ABOUT ME
I AM STILL SCARED OF DYING
AND I AM SCARED OF BEING IN CONTROL
AND I AM SCARED OF BEING IN CONTROL BECAUSE IF I'M IN CONTROL THEN I'M NEVER GOING TO DIE
AND IF I NEVER DIE THEN I'LL HAVE TO BE IN CONTROL FOREVER
AND IT'S TOO MUCH WORK FOREVER
IT'S LIKE A MOUNTAIN THAT WON'T STOP GROWING

I THINK THE MOUSE DIED BECAUSE I SQUEEZED IT TOO HARD
OR MAYBE IT HAD A HEART ATTACK FROM THE STRESS OF BEING CAPTURED BY TWO SMALL BOYS.
THEY COULD HAVE BEEN MY FATHER AND UNCLE BUT THEY WERE MY FRIEND AND ME.
IT WAS MY FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH DEATH, SO IT MUST HAVE BEEN LIFE-ALTERING.
I DON'T THINK ABOUT IT FOR THE FIRST TIME, BUT FOR HOW LONG AGO THAT WAS AND HOW
LITTLE I REMEMBER ABOUT IT, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS SUCH AN INTENSE EVENT.
NOW THAT I AM AN ADULT, I AM SURE THAT THE MEMORY HAS BEEN REPRESSED.

THE LESSER BROTHERHOOD

BY MANTRA DAS

AS A TEENAGER, I WAS INITIATED INTO THE ORDER OF THE ARROW
I SPENT THE NIGHT ON A GENTLY SLOPING HILL WITHOUT A TENT
IT WAS OTHERWORLDLY AND COLD BUT NOT SCARY
WE HAD TO CUT DOWN TREES ALL DAY WITHOUT EATING ANYTHING
I FELT LAZY BECAUSE I HATE WORK
I WON'T GO INTO HOW I FELT ABOUT MY FELLOW INDUCTEES
THE NEXT DAY WE WERE GIVEN NEW NAMES BY THE SPIRIT OF A DEAD INDIAN CHIEF
I WAS CALLED ATE, THE OPPOSITE OF ATE
WE DRANK A WHITE LIQUID THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO MAKE US BRAVE
THEN WE BEGAN THE TREK TO THE TOP OF A MOUNTAIN, WHERE WE WATCHED THE SUNSET
WE WERE SUPPOSED TO FEEL CLOSE TO GOD BUT I DIDN'T
WHEN WE GOT BACK, I WAS GIVEN A TOMAHAWK AND A QUIVER FULL OF ARROWS
AND IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT IF I HAD BEEN BORN AN INDIAN, I WOULD HAVE BEEN DEAD

THE CROSSROADS OF THE WORLD

BY MANTRA DAS

WHEN I WAS HAVING A MIXED BIPOLAR EPISODE, I CONFRONTED THE DEVIL
I BOWED IN THE FOUR DIRECTIONS AT THE CROSSROADS
I CHALLENGED THE DEVIL– I WAS TEMPTED
I FEEL LIKE I DEFEATED HIM, I MADE A FOOL OF MYSELF BUT NEVER DID THE SINS
I DIDN'T SELL MY SOUL
I AM NOT A QUITTER
I WAS THERE FOR A FEW HOURS, I DIDN'T WANT TO LEAVE
I FELT LIKE I WAS IN A MOVIE, PEOPLE WERE TELLING ME TO LEAVE
I THOUGHT I WAS DEAD, I DIDN'T WANT TO DIE
I WENT TO THE HOSPITAL AND I GOT MEDICATED
I AM NOT AFRAID OF DEATH– THE DEVIL DID NOT WIN
THE DEVIL DIDN'T PUT HIS HANDS ON ME– I AM STILL HERE, THE BATTLE IS WON
I AM STRONGER THAN MY DISEASE– I AM STRONGER THAN THE DEVIL
I AM STRONGER THAN MY DEMONS.
THIS IS MY STORY.

COYOTE

BY MANTRA DAS

BECAUSE THE COYOTE SPIRIT SAVED MY LIFE, I HAD TO SERVE HIM

I HAD TO ACT OUT HIS WILD WAYS UNTIL I PAID THE PRICE

I WAS LEFT HOLDING THE BAG, DESTROYED

COYOTE SPIRIT LIFTS ME BACK UP AGAIN AND AGAIN

I WILL NEVER FEAR FAILURE OR DEFEAT BECAUSE OF THAT

COYOTE SPIRIT IS NOT ABOUT SEX

HE'S ABOUT ALL THE THINGS YOU WANT, BUT THINK YOU CAN'T HAVE

COYOTE SPIRIT IS THE WILD URGE TO TAKE WHAT YOU WANT FROM LIFE

AND COYOTE SPIRIT WILL HELP YOU FIND YOUR OWN PATH TO HEALING

SINKING IN THE EARTH

BY MANTRA DAS

ONE OF MY CHILDHOOD FRIENDS DIED IN A CAR WRECK AND MAMMOTH CAVE
I REMEMBER IT BECAUSE HE GOT IN A WRECK EARLIER WHEN I WAS IN THE CAR
I ALWAYS WONDERED IF HE WAS DRINKING, BUT DOES THAT MATTER?
IF SOMEBODY DIES, WHY SHOULD YOU JUDGE THEM LIKE THAT.
I REMEMBER WE WERE DRIVING BACK FROM A HOUSE PARTY, IT WAS LATE AND THE ROAD WAS EMPTY
WE WERE THE ONLY ONES ON IT, I WAS IN THE BACKSEAT WITH HIM AND HE PASSED OUT
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO, SO I JUST WAITED THERE AND WATCHED
HE WOKE UP AND STARTED DRIVING AGAIN. HE SAID HE HADN'T BEEN ASLEEP; HE HAD BEEN DAYDREAMING.
THE CAR SPUN OUT AND HIT A TREE. MY FRIEND DIED, BUT I LIVED—NOT FOR LONG, THOUGH, BECAUSE I DIED SOON AFTER
OF CANCER.
I WASN'T HURT IN THE WRECK, BUT I GUESS I WAS TOO CLOSE TO DYING ALREADY,
OR MAYBE SOMETHING ELSE HAPPENED THAT I DON'T REMEMBER, OR MAYBE IT WAS THE FACT THAT I WENT TO HIS
FUNERAL
I DON'T KNOW, BUT I REMEMBER THE DAY HE DIED, AND I REMEMBER THE DAY I DIED, AND I REMEMBER THE DAY WE
WERE DRIVING BACK FROM THE PARTY.

A GATHERING OF RAVENS

BY MANTRA DAS

I WALKED TO THE PLACE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE RAVINE WHERE COYOTE LURE THE DEER
CORNERING THE DEER INTO AN AVALANCHE OF SHALE
THE ROCKS WERE TINTED RED
RECEIVING MINDS—EYE VISIONS
OF FIERCE COYOTES BEARING WHITE TEETH AND GENTLE BROWN CUBS
I WAS WATCHING THE BRUSH FOR DEER
AND SAW THE BLACK MASS OF RAVENS
I HEARD THE CAWING OF CROWS AND RAVENS
THE SCOLDING OF MAGPIES —THE RAVENS AND CROWS WERE SCOLDING ME
I LOOKED INTO THEIR EYES AND SAW THEY WERE NOT SCOLDING ME
I FELT THEIR CLAWS AND BEAKS ON MY EYELIDS
I FELT THEIR WINGS
I HEARD THEM CALLING OUT TO EACH OTHER IN A LANGUAGE LIKE A STRINGED INSTRUMENT
I WATCHED THEM FLYING ABOVE THE CLIFFS OF THE RAVINE
AND I KNEW THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT ME

THE STAIRS

BY MANTRA DAS

I WAS LAYING IN BED MESSING WITH MY PHONE WHEN MY DAUGHTER FELL DOWN THE STAIRS
BEFORE SHE FELL, I THOUGHT THAT I SHOULD GET UP
'SHE'LL BE OK' I WAGERED TO MYSELF
SHE COULD HAVE BROKEN HER NECK BECAUSE OF ME
AND I FELT LIKE I WAS THE MOST SELFISH MAN IN THE WORLD
I THOUGHT ABOUT GETTING UP TO GO GET HER BUT I DIDN'T
FIVE SECONDS LATER, SHE WAS RUNNING INTO MY ROOM
AND I WOKE UP FROM THAT DREAM LIKE IT WAS A HALF-LIFE

UNDER THE FLAG

BY MANTRA DAS

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN FASCINATED WITH CAVE FISH
IT MAKES SENSE THAT THE WHITE FISH IN THE DARKNESS DO NOT NEED EYES
I THINK OF WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO LIVE IN THE DARKNESS MY ENTIRE LIFE
I FEEL SAFE IN THOSE TIMELESS CAVES
I AM A CAVE EXPLORER
I AM AN ADVENTURER IN THE DARKNESS
I DO NOT FEAR WHAT I DO NOT KNOW
I AM A LITTLE FISH IN THE DEEP SEA
I AM SAFE FROM THE WORLD WHEN I AM IN THE CAVE
THAT IS WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO LIVE IN THE DARKNESS MY ENTIRE LIFE
THAT IS WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO SEE NOTHING BUT WHITE
THAT IS WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO GO BACK TO WHERE YOU CAME FROM

EASTER

BY MANTRA DAS

I HAD A DREAM I WAS WAITING IN LINE TO BE KILLED
IN A LINE AT THE AIRPORT, WALKING THE TERMINAL IN A LINE
I CHOSE TO HAVE MY THROAT SLIT, OUT OF THE THREE OPTIONS
I APPROACHED BRAVELY AS THE OFFICER SLIT MY THROAT
I ACCEPTED JESUS AS I FADED TO BLACK
THE WORLD BECAME A LIVING PAINTING, A WORK OF ART
MY REMAINS WERE TAKEN AWAY, EVERY LAST CELL SCRAPPED OFF
OF MY SKIN, MY FINGERNAILS, MY HAIR, MY EYES, MY TEETH
I WAS REBORN IN A WOODED AREA ON A COLD MORNING
THE RAYS OF THE SUN COVERED ME LIKE A BLANKET
I WAS REBORN IN A WOODED AREA ON A COLD MORNING
AND I FELT LIKE SLEEPING AGAIN.

JESUS, LAZARUS, AND THE RICH YOUNG RULER

BY MANTRA DAS

I WAS CONVINCED THAT DEMONS WERE IN MY HOUSE
I PUT A CROSS IN EVERY ROOM AND CLENCHED MY ROSARY
I DID RITUALS TO THE SAINTS— IT WAS MY FAULT THE DEMONS CAME
I SAW ONE ONCE, AS I WOKE FROM SLEEP
TOWERING 8 FEET TALL IN THE SHADOWS
I HEARD THE DEMON SCREAM "JESUS"
I SAW HIM RUN ACROSS THE ROOM, FASTER THAN ANYTHING I'D SEEN BEFORE
JESUS WAS TALLER, HIS BROWN HAIR FELL TO HIS SHOULDERS
HE WORE A ROBE AND HELD A STAFF, A PALM FROND IN HIS HAND
HE WALKED THROUGH THE HOUSE LIKE HE OWNED IT.
WITHOUT ASKING PERMISSION, HE SAT AT THE HEAD OF MY TABLE. HE ATE MY FOOD.
WHEN I OFFERED HIM WINE, HE SAID "I DON'T DRINK WINE."
I WENT TO BED THAT NIGHT SURE I WAS GOING TO DIE
I WAITED FOR THE DEMON TO COME BACK AND KILL ME FIRST.
I ASKED JESUS IF HE COULD TELL ME IF I WAS GOING TO DIE.
HE SAID "NO ONE KNOWS WHEN THEY ARE GOING TO DIE"
THAT WAS WHEN I ABANDONED HIM.
I'M RICH NOW, I HAVE EVERYTHING I EVER WANTED
I'VE HAD A GOOD LIFE AND I KNOW I WILL HAVE A GOOD DEATH
BUT MY HEART IS CRYING OUT IN THE SILENCE. JESUS! LAZARUS! RICH YOUNG RULER! I'M AFRAID OF DYING ALONE.

AWAKE

BY MANTRA DAS

WHEN I WAS MANIC AND ON DRUGS IN COLLEGE
I SIGNED UP FOR A CLASS ON ROBOTIC ART
JUST LIKE A MAD SCIENTIST, I COLLECTED SPARE PARTS
DREAMING OF BUILDING A FUNCTIONING ROBOT
I ENDED UP FREAKING OUT AND BURNING UP MY PIC CHIP
I MADE A ROBOT THAT LOOKED LIKE A ROACH
I ALMOST GOT KICKED OUT OF SCHOOL
BUT THE ROBOT WAS AWAKE

DOLPHINS

BY MANTRA DAS

AT THE OCEAN, I SAW A DOLPHIN
I THOUGHT IT WAS A SHARK AND FREAKED OUT
NOBODY WANTS TO SEE A GREY FIN IN THE OCEAN
LOVE THE OCEAN BUT I HATE BEING IN THE WATER
PICTURING EELS AND JELLYFISH AND UNKNOWN TERRORS
GET OUT OF THE POOL AND INTO THE OCEAN
WEAR A MASK AND A SNORKEL AND FINS
PUT YOUR BODY IN THE OCEAN AND SWIM
WITH THE DOLPHINS WHO PUT THEIR BODIES IN THE OCEAN
DOLPHINS WHO KNOW THE OCEAN LIKE THEY KNOW THEIR OWN BODIES
DOLPHINS WHO LET THEIR BODIES MOVE THROUGH THE OCEAN
DOLPHINS WHO KNOW THEIR BODIES ARE PART OF THE OCEAN
DOLPHINS WHO FLOAT WITH THEIR BODIES SUSPENDED IN THE OCEAN
DOLPHINS WHO LET THEIR BODIES MOVE THROUGH THE WATER
FASTER THAN ANY SWIMMER'S ARMS COULD EVER PULL THEM THROUGH WATER
DOLPHINS WHO LET THEIR BODIES DANCE IN THE WATER LIKE FISH DO
A GREY FIN MOVING THROUGH WATER LIKE A SHARK'S FIN WOULD IF IT WAS A DOLPHIN INSTEAD OF A SHARK
DOLPHINS, WHO KNOW THE OCEAN IS THEIR HOME, HAVE TO BE CAREFUL WHERE THEY PUT THEIR BODIES IN IT.

SPRING

BY MANTRA DAS

I LOVE WATCHING THE SUN RISE ON THE INTERSTATE
AN AMAZING NEW COLOR PALATE EACH DAY
A NEW QUALIA EACH DAY
I SWERVE BETWEEN LANES TAKING PICTURES OF IT
I'M CAREFUL BUT A SMALL SWERVE IS INEVITABLE
I'M NOT THINKING ABOUT IT
MY MIND IS FAR AWAY IN THE SUN

I SET MY ALARM FOR 5 AM
I GET UP TO WITNESS THE SUNRISE BUT IT'S ALWAYS CLOUDY
OR RAINING OR TOO COLD
THE SUN DIPS BELOW THE HORIZON AND I'M DISAPPOINTED
I HAVE TO BE AT THE OFFICE IN AN HOUR
I LIE DOWN AGAIN AND CLOSE MY EYES
THE SUN COMES UP AGAIN BUT IT'S A DIFFERENT SUN
A NEW COLOR PALATE HAS EMERGED AND IT'S JUST AS BEAUTIFUL AS BEFORE
BUT I'M NOT THINKING ABOUT IT
MY MIND IS FAR AWAY IN THE SUN

THE LOTTERY IN LIFE

BY MANTRA DAS

DURING MEDITATION, MY MUSCLES ALL STRETCH
LIKE A NEW BABY DEER MOVING ITS LEGS FOR THE FIRST TIME
LIKE I AM WAKING UP FROM A DREAM
LIKE I AM WAKING UP WHEN I SLEEP IN ON THE WEEKEND
MY MIND WANDERS BUT TO CALM PLACES
TO A BEACH WITH GENTLE WAVES THAT LAP AT MY FEET
TO A DESERT WHERE I AM THE ONLY LIVING BEING, BUT I FEEL ALIVE
MY MIND WANDERS AWAY FROM PAIN, AWAY FROM DEATH
AWAY FROM RUIN AND BROKENNESS, AWAY FROM ILLNESS AND SADNESS
MY MIND WANDERS TO THE PARTS OF LIFE THAT MAKE ME HAPPY
I CAN FEEL MY BODY RELAXING LIKE A GOOD BOOK
LIKE A WARM BATH AFTER A LONG DAY
LIKE SINKING INTO A SOFT MATTRESS AFTER A RESTFUL SLEEP
I FOCUS ON THE WONDERFUL PARTS OF LIFE, NOT THE BAD ONES.
I FOCUS ON THE BEAUTIFUL THINGS, NOT THE UGLY ONES.
I FOCUS ON THE GOOD THINGS, NOT THE BAD THINGS.
I FOCUS ON THE PARTS OF LIFE THAT GIVE ME HAPPINESS, PEACE, AND LOVE.
I FOCUS ON WHAT IS GOOD AND PURE IN MY LIFE.
I FOCUS ON WHAT MAKES ME FEEL ALIVE AND INSPIRED.
I FOCUS ON WHAT GIVES ME HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.
I FOCUS ON WHAT LIFTS MY SPIRITS WHEN I AM FEELING LOW.
I FOCUS ON WHAT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I AM DOING EVERYTHING RIGHT IN MY LIFE.
I FOCUS ON WHAT GIVES ME JOY WHEN I AM SAD.
I FOCUS ON WHAT BRINGS ME BACK TO REALITY WHEN I AM IN A FANTASY WORLD.
I FOCUS ON WHAT BRINGS ME BACK TO LIFE WHEN I AM IN A COMA.
I FOCUS ON MY BLESSINGS.
I FOCUS ON MY LIFE.
I FOCUS ON MY LOVE.
I FOCUS ON MY FAMILY.
I FOCUS ON MY FRIENDS.
I FOCUS ON MY FUTURE.
I FOCUS ON MY PAST.

GANESA

BY MANTRA DAS

ONCE I DID THE GANESH CHANT UNDER SOME PINE TREES
AN OCEAN OF PINE AND ONLY ONE SQUIRREL
UNDER A THIN, GREEN, DROOPING PINE BRANCH
ANOINTED BY A GENTLE RAIN OF PINE NEEDLES BUT WAS IT REAL?
IT WAS THE SQUIRREL, AN INCREDIBLE COINCIDENCE
I HAD NEVER SEEN THE SQUIRREL BEFORE, BUT NOW IT HAPPENED
IT WAS RAINING AND I WAS CHANTING
THE SQUIRREL CAME RIGHT UP TO ME AND LAID ITS HEAD ON MY FOOT
LIKE AN OFFERING, I KEPT CHANTING.
I HAD NEVER SEEN THE SQUIRREL BEFORE, BUT NOW IT HAPPENED.

THE TIP

BY MANTRA DAS

ONE TIME AN OLD MAN WALKED OUT OF THE MEN'S ROOM AS THOUGH HE HAD SEEN A GHOST

HE TOLD ME "I'M SORRY" AND HANDED ME A FIVE DOLLAR BILL

. I WAS GRATEFUL FOR THE \$5 BUT I HAD TO CLEAN UP A LITERAL SHIT EXPLOSION

FROM ALL OVER THE WALLS

YUCK

I FELT SO BAD FOR HIM, BUT AT THE SAME TIME I WAS LIKE, "WHAT THE ACTUAL FUCK"

MY MANAGER WAS PISSED AND MADE ME RE-CLEAN THE BATHROOM

I'M GLAD I DIDN'T SEE WHO DID THAT.

THE WHITE SAGE

BY MANTRA DAS

WHITE SAGE

ORANGE, YELLOW, AND GREEN CANDLES

TAKE ME AT MY WORD

THIS IS HAPPENING

A BLACK AND WHITE CIGARETTE LIGHTER WITH DOLPHINS ON IT

SITS ON THE TABLE

NOW THE SAGE IS WHITE

IT SMELLS OF WOOD BUT ALSO LIKE THE OCEAN

YOU TOLD ME IT'S A SIGN OF DEATH

I DON'T KNOW WHY I THOUGHT YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT ME.

ENLIGHTENMENT

BY MANTRA DAS

A BUNCH OF OLD PEOPLE ARE SITTING UNDER THE TREE,
TALKING ABOUT THEIR LIVES AND ARGUING ABOUT THE WEATHER.
'I REMEMBER THE TIME WHEN I WAS YOUNG'
'I REMEMBER WHEN I HAD A JOB'
'I REMEMBER WHEN I HAD A PURPOSE'
THE YOUNG PEOPLE ARE SITTING UNDER THE HOSPITAL CAFE IN THE RAIN,
TALKING ABOUT HOW TO PASS THE TIME.
'I DON'T REMEMBER ANYTHING'
'I DON'T REMEMBER WHAT I WAS BORN FOR'
'I DON'T REMEMBER WHO I WAS'
I AM SURROUNDED BY PARADOXICAL MOVEMENTS.
I AM THE GRASS ON A RAINY DAY.
'MAYBE I NEED TO WORK HARDER,
OR MAYBE
I NEED TO WORK SMARTER.
BECAUSE I'M STILL NOT FEELING BETTER.
I'M STILL NOT FEELING WHOLE
OR AT PEACE
WITH MY SELF.
I'M STILL NOT FEELING ALIVE.
DELTA WAVES, THETA WAVES, ALPHA WAVES.'
I WAS AT A DECISION
THE PURPOSE OF LIFE IS TO WALK IN THE GREEN IN FRONT OF THE HOSPITAL CAFE.
NOBODY SEEMS TO UNDERSTAND THAT I AM LOOKING FOR AN EXPERIENCE OF GOD.
I AM SO SICK OF READING ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE'S REVELATIONS.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW ANYONE CAN BE SO SMUG!
THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT ALL OF US HAVE BEEN TOUCHED BY GOD.
I WANT TO NOT BE TOUCHED.
I WANT TO EXPERIENCE NOTHING.
I WANT TO EXPERIENCE THE NOTHING THAT EXISTS BEFORE THE BEGINNING.
I WANT TO EXPERIENCE THAT NOTHING SO THAT I MYSELF CAN BE SOMETHING.
WHERE IS THAT HOSPITAL CAFE'?

UPON MY SHED

BY MANTRA DAS

I STAND UPON THE WINDOWSILL
DESCENDING CAREFULLY OUTSIDE
SECOND STORY WINDOW
ABOVE A THORN-FILLED BUSH WITH SOFT POWDERY LEAVES
DESCENDING
I STEP UPON THE ROOF OF A SMALL SHED
AND SIT FOR A TIME, LOOKING OUT ACROSS MY YARD
AT THE TREES AND BEYOND
I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN DRAWN TO THE FOREST, IT CALLS TO ME
TO COME IN AND GET LOST
THE TREES ARE TALL, THEIR TRUNKS STRONG
THEIR BRANCHES LONG AND REACHING
PUSHING AGAINST THE SKY
REACHING FOR SUNLIGHT
I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN DRAWN TO THE FOREST, IT CALLS TO ME
TO COME IN AND GET LOST
THERE IS SUCH MYSTERY IN THE FOREST
SUCH LIFE AND ENERGY, BOTH WILD AND UNTAMED
I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN DRAWN TO THE FOREST, IT CALLS TO ME
TO COME IN AND GET LOST
I STAND UPON MY SHED I STEP INTO THE FOREST AND FIND MYSELF AMID THE TREES
THEY ARE TALL AND STRONG
THEY ARE MY FRIENDS
I AM A PART OF THEM
THEY ARE A PART OF ME
I STAND UPON MY SHED I STEP INTO THE FOREST AND FIND MYSELF AMID THE TREES
THEY ARE TALL AND STRONG
THEY ARE MY FRIENDS
I AM A PART OF THEM
THEY ARE A PART OF ME
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